PROBLEMS OF COMMUNISM

NOVEMBER
DECEMBER
1968

Czechoslovakia

The Brief Spring of 1968

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NOV-DEC 1968
VOL. XVII
6

PROBLEMS OF COMMUNISM

CZECHOSLOVAKIA:
The Brief Spring of 1968

Problems of Communism is a bimonthly publication. Its purpose is to provide analyses and significant background information on various aspects of world communism today. Opinions expressed by contributors do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the United States Government. Editorial office: U.S. Information Agency, 1776 Pennsylvania Avenue N.W., Washington, D.C., 20547.

How to Subscribe: Outside of the United States, *Problems of Communism* may be obtained free of charge by writing to the nearest office of the U.S. Information Service. Residents of the United States may purchase annual subscriptions or single copies by writing to the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 20402. Price per copy: $.50. Subscription price: $3.00.

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Cover photo: Corner in downtown Prague, with direction signs blacked out and "Moscow" in Russian painted in. Words on wall below read "Russians Go Home."

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CZECHOSLOVAKIA

The Brief Spring of 1968

As long as we are still alive we shall continue to believe in the power of our truth and to pin our hopes to it—the truth of freedom and decency, the truth of reason, the truth of all of us, the truth which makes a man a human being. We are still fighting with our only weapons—with words—although this may be our last stand.

However, we firmly believe that the need which evoked these words will not come to an end, even if the sound of these words is muted: the need which is expressed by the will to live in freedom, in human honor, in an age of reason. And we believe in the meaning of this will, which no one has ever succeeded in breaking in the long history of mankind.

Even those who must submit to coercion are not released thereby from their duty to show their contempt for coercion, to show contempt for all who succumb and who discredit themselves.

"If we should not meet again, we wish all of you to love one another; do not let good people be oppressed; let everyone speak his truth"—(Jan Hus).

—From *Literarni listy* (Prague), Aug. 22, 1968 (clandestine issue)

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The Sparrow in the Cage

By Richard Lowenthal

During the night of August 20–21, the Soviet Union and four of its Warsaw Pact allies invaded and occupied the territory of a fifth ally, Czechoslovakia, in order to change the policy of its ruling Communist party. Military preparations for that action had been visibly conducted since early May; threatening public statements as well as internal information meetings for party activists in the participating states had presaged it for more than a month. Nevertheless, both the actual decision to invade and the manner of its execution came as a surprise to most diplomats and other observers outside the Soviet bloc. The invasion itself was unexpected since there had been widespread belief that the Soviets were merely bluffing and would shun the political cost of carrying out their threat. Just as surprising was the apparent lack of political preparations for an alternative Czechoslovak leadership to match the skillful military staffwork that had been done.

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On the first score, it had been argued that the Czechoslovak party and government leaders had given the Soviets reason enough for protest and pressure, but no serious cause for armed intervention. Prague had clearly demonstrated its willingness to keep within the limits of precedent established by past and current Soviet practice—negatively in Hungary, positively in Poland, and more recently in Rumania: preservation of single-party rule and loyalty to the military alliance. Even if the details of Prague's domestic and foreign policy continued to displease the bloc's leading power as well as its more rigid-thinking members, would the collective oligarchs in Moscow really risk the evaporation of any remaining spirit of detente, the revitalization of NATO through a renewed sense of common danger, and the ruin of the impending world conference of Communist parties, merely in order to refuse to the Czechs and Slovaks a degree of domestic autonomy which Khrushchev had, however reluctantly, conceded to the Poles in 1956, and a measure of independence in foreign policy which they themselves were currently tolerating on the part of Rumania?

On the second score, past experience had indicated that once the Soviets really decided to subjugate a country by force, they could be relied upon to have their satellite government ready for installa-

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tion. Yet this time they failed conspicuously to produce the "loyal comrades" who were supposed to have invited their troops, and after days of floundering found themselves forced to negotiate with the very leaders they had arrested on arrival and even to reinstate them, at least provisionally. Didn't this prove that the top Soviet leadership was almost as much surprised by the invasion as the outside experts—that the crucial decision was a last-minute improvisation, forced on a wavering and divided Politburo by a combination of worried generals, middle-rank *apparatchiki*, and frightened hard-line allies in an unforeseeable sudden upset?

There can indeed be no doubt that the Czech and Slovak Communists' experiment in combining controlled liberalization at home with a striving for limited but real autonomy in foreign policy has confronted the Soviet leaders with their most difficult choice since the fall of Khrushchev. Evidence of division and vacillation in the collective leadership is conclusive, not only for the weeks preceding the crucial decision, but even after it—in fact, the decision remained open-ended in important aspects for more than a month after the invasion. Yet there is no evidence whatever to back the hypothesis that the Politburo was overridden by its subordinates in some sudden, irrational and therefore unforseeable upheaval. On the contrary, it can be shown that the decision to occupy Czechoslovakia regardless of political cost, however reluctantly arrived at, represents the culmination of trends in the foreign and domestic policy of the Soviet collective leadership that had been visibly gathering strength for the past two years; while the political floundering that followed the military *Blitz* was due not to improvisation and lack of political planning, but to rigid commitment to a plan which proved to have been based on gross miscalculation.

Principal Guidelines

Clearly, an understanding of the considerations underlying the Soviet decision is of major importance not only for a historical interpretation of the tragedy of Czechoslovakia, but for an appreciation of the nature of the present Soviet leadership and of the factors likely to continue guiding its decisions while it remains in power. Before further discussion, it may be useful to outline briefly the principal theses of the interpretation offered here.

First, the recent trend of Soviet foreign policy has been to give increasing priority to the cohesion of Moscow's East European power sphere over any attempt to influence developments farther afield, and certainly over the interests of the pro-Soviet Communist parties. While Rumania was regarded as peripheral for bloc cohesion, the role of Czechoslovakia—in maintaining not only the military but above all the political and economic unity of the bloc in the face of Western temptations—was held to be as crucial in 1968 as it had been for "shielding" Eastern Europe from the lure of the Marshall Plan in 1947. Then, Stalin's flat statement to the Czech government that acceptance of Marshall Plan aid was incompatible with the Soviet-Czechoslovak alliance was both the prelude to the liquidation of Czech democracy (by the coup of February 1948) and an earnest of Russia's determination to keep all forms of Western influence out of her newly conquered empire. Now the Soviets have come to regard the possible Czech acceptance of West German credits, in a context of improving political relations, as a danger comparable to that "colonization by the dollar" once feared by Stalin—likely not only to undermine Moscow's hold on Czechoslovakia's economic resources, but to set an example of political reorientation for other East European states that would end in the isolation of the Soviets' East German bastion.

Second, the Kremlin's fear of the disruptive effect that West German economic strength and political contacts might have on the bloc had a domestic parallel in its increasing worry over the encouragement derived by critical Soviet intellectuals from the example of the new freedom of public debate in Czechoslovakia. For, corresponding to the foreign policy priority of holding onto Soviet power in Eastern Europe, the chief trend in recent Soviet domestic policy has been the effort to intimidate the critical intelligentsia and restore them to conformist discipline. At home as abroad, the post-Khrushchev collective has gradually revealed itself as an oligarchy of conservative bureaucrats, primarily concerned neither to force violent, Stalin-style transformation on society nor to meet its contemporary needs by liberalization, but merely to hold onto its power—partly by stepping up armaments in a framework of economic growth, partly by police measures thinly cloaked in the ideological verbiage of a bygone period. It was pervasive fear of change —the *raison d'état* of an empire in decline which is also a police state on the defensive—that finally tipped the balance in favor of military action.

Third, still another fear of the Soviet rulers accounts for their initial political paralysis and subsequent about-face in the days following the invasion—the fear of provoking a Hungarian-style pop-

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ular rising supported by local army elements, with unforeseeable repercussions in the neighboring countries. Because of that fear (and because of the natural preference of conservative bureaucrats for "constitutional" procedures), Moscow did not wish to overthrow the leadership of Czechoslovakia's Communist party and government by naked force: it expected the *legitimate* organs of party and state to change their leadership once the occupation was an accomplished fact. As Soviet and East German statements in the first critical days make clear, the invaders' information from their "loyal comrades" was that once the tanks arrived in Prague, the "Dubcek group" would become a minority and the willing collaborators a majority in the party Presidium, and that President Svodoba would have to appoint a new government according to the will of the new majority. When that expectation proved wrong, the disoriented Soviets arrested the leading reformers—but could not replace them, not because collaborators were lacking, but because the latter had failed to establish the "legitimacy" that had been stipulated as a condition for the invasion.

From Weakness to Strength

During the first two years that followed the fall of Khrushchev, Soviet foreign policy fully recovered from the double shock it had been dealt in 1962–63 by Moscow's defeat in the Cuban missile crisis and by its virtual break with Communist China. In 1963 President Kennedy's offer of a detente had been accepted primarily as a breathing space for recovering from a position of weakness. By 1965 the Soviet leaders were able to launch new initiatives on the basis of a revised assessment of their priority interests.

Their basic decision was that the worldwide power competition against the United States in general, and the contest for the balance of power in Europe in particular, would continue to be of greater urgency—at least for some years to come—than the bitter new rivalry with Communist China.[1] It seems unlikely that Khrushchev's successors have ever had serious hopes of a reconciliation with Mao Tse-tung, or even that they have counted on an effective restoration of the defunct Chinese alliance (as distinct from a more pragmatic form of watchful coexistence) after his death. But they seem to have made a realistic judgment that the danger from the East lay in the future rather than in the present, and that for the time being it could be met by comparatively limited efforts (such as re-engagement in Vietnam by arms deliveries, combined with offers of "united action" designed to unmask Peking's hypocrisy; improvement of Soviet relations with Japan; deterrence of Chinese threats against India; and intensified paramilitary training in the Far Eastern border regions).

By contrast, American power was seen as by far the more immediate threat. The Soviet rulers perceived the US as armed with the superior strategic strength and tactical mobility demonstrated in Cuba, as liable to abuse these advantages for interventions of the Vietnam and Dominican type, and as potentially dangerous to Soviet security in Europe by its alliance with "revanchist" West Germany. The Soviet leaders may not really believe that the "American imperialists" would deliberately launch a nuclear war, or that the West Germans would use the Bundeswehr for an attempt to reunify the national territory at the risk of national suicide; still, they regard the link between German territorial revisionism and US nuclear power not only as the one standing challenge to their own military control of Eastern Europe up to the Elbe, but as a line-up of interests involving *at least* some risk of *unintended* nuclear war. For that reason, the breakup of the NATO alliance—meaning in effect primarily of the military link between Washington and Bonn—has, ever since 1955, ranked second only to the preservation of the East European *status quo* itself on the Soviet list of priorities. By 1965, American involvement in Vietnam combined with the new policies of General de Gaulle to produce an open crisis in NATO that seemed for the first time to bring the prize within the reach of the Kremlin leaders.

Khrushchev's successors thus concentrated their main efforts on catching up with American military power on one side, and on exploiting the crisis of NATO, with a view to the 1969 deadline for its possible dissolution, on the other. Their remarkable achievements in the field of armaments—the approach to parity with the US in strategic weapons of mass destruction, and the increase in highly mobile, sea and airborne forces for conventional military action at long range—are now a matter of public record. To create incentives for the dissolution of NATO, the Soviets used a two-pronged approach: they launched a major campaign for a "European Security System" that would replace

[1] See on this point R. Lowenthal, "China's Impact on the Evolution of the Alliances in Europe," in *Western and Eastern Europe: The Changing Relationship*, Adelphi Papers, No. 33, London, 1967.

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both NATO and the Warsaw Pact, working hard to get the European neutrals as well as member states of NATO interested in a "European security conference" to discuss the project; at the same time, they took active steps to build up a solid power sphere in the Middle East and Eastern Mediterranean from which they would eventually be able to threaten NATO's southern flank.

There was, of course, a certain inconsistency between these various aspects of Soviet policy towards the West. The campaign to end the division of Europe into hostile military blocs by creating an all-inclusive European security system depended for its success on the climate of the East-West detente, whereas the speedup of Soviet armaments and the growing implantation of Soviet power in the Middle East and the Eastern Mediterranean were liable to disturb that climate once their results became obvious. It is a matter of speculation whether this inconsistency reflected imperfect agreement within the collective leadership, or whether the men in the Kremlin were just waiting to see how far their "soft" detente diplomacy might get them before their "hard" power ploys became visible. What is certain is that until the turn of 1966-67 they were remarkably successful in both directions. Their switch from the dispersal of political energies and economic resources in widely scattered parts of the underdeveloped world (characteristic of Khrushchev's conduct of affairs down to the Cuban missile crisis) to a heavy concentration of political, economic and military effort on the Middle East bore fruit both in increasingly close ties with the "progressive" Arab states and in a growing detachment of Turkish and Iranian policy from the West.

The entry of pro-Soviet Communist ministers into the new Syrian government in the spring of 1966, followed by Premier Kosygin's appeal for a bloc of liberated Arab states leaning on Soviet support,[2] marked a critical shift from an anti-Western "strategy of denial" in this region to its proclamation as a Soviet sphere of influence; but it seems the significance was not appreciated in the chanceries of the Western powers—no more than was the significance of the growing Soviet campaign against the presence of the American Sixth Fleet in the Eastern Mediterranean, and the quick and steady increase in the Mediterranean Detachment of the Soviet Black Sea Fleet.

Status Quo and Security

Meanwhile the campaign for a "European Security System"—a concept first put forward by the USSR in 1954-55 as an alternative to the creation of a West German army in the NATO framework—had been revived in 1965 and had enabled Moscow to wrest the diplomatic initiative in Europe from a divided West. Favored by American preoccupation elsewhere and by the immobility of successive West German governments, as much as by General de Gaulle's illusion of a Franco-Russian partnership in rebuilding an undivided Europe, the campaign reached a climax in the summer of 1966—first, with the French leader's state visit to the Soviet Union, following the French departure from NATO's integrated military organization, and finally, with the official formulation of the Soviet program for European security by the Bucharest conference of the Warsaw Pact.

The two key passages of the Bucharest Declaration [3] proclaimed the need for the general acceptance of the territorial *status quo* in Europe on one side, and a plan for replacing the opposing military alliances by an overall security system on the other. The first, addressed primarily to the Federal Republic, insisted on its recognition of the legitimacy and permanence not only of the existing frontiers between Germany and her Eastern neighbors, but of the partition of Germany proper: Bonn was summoned to recognize the sovereignty of the East German state and to renounce all constitutional rights in the "separate territory" of West Berlin. The second key passage suggested that this European order should be jointly guaranteed by all East and West European states, leaving open the question of American participation in such a pact. It explicitly affirmed the willingness of the member states of the Warsaw Pact to dissolve their military alliance in favor of the new security system if the members of NATO would dissolve theirs; and it went on to suggest that if the signatories of the North Atlantic Treaty were not willing to take this final step at once, a dissolution of the integrated military organizations of both pacts could serve as a first instalment (a proposal facilitated by the fact that the Warsaw Pact had no such integrated organization).

As Western diplomats recognized at once, the plan contained an even more important pitfall:

[2] Kosygin's appeal was launched in an address to the National Assembly of the UAR in Cairo; see *Pravda*, May 18, 1966.

[3] *For Peace and Security: Materials on the Meeting in Bucharest, July 4-6, 1966*, Moscow, 1966.

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it said nothing about the network of bilateral 20-year treaties between the Communist states of Eastern Europe, most of them originally signed at the end of World War II and thus outdating the Warsaw Pact. The Soviet treaties with Czechoslovakia and Poland had just been renewed in 1963 and 1965 for another 20 years, and a new 20-year treaty between Russia and Eastern Germany had been added in 1964. Hence Soviet troops could have remained on the Elbe even after the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact, while the Americans would have had to go home after the dissolution of NATO; and the formal sanction of the territorial *status quo* under the Bucharest plan would have been accompanied in effect by the establishment of Russia as the dominant military power on the continent of Europe, and thus by a decisive shift in the world balance of power. But while these considerations caused the Western governments, including Gaullist France, to be wary of the Bucharest proposals as they stood, they seemed to offer at least a starting point for discussion; and on a continent whose peoples had become increasingly weary of postwar partition and domination by the superpowers, the fact that the Soviets had come forward with *some* proposal for radical change gave them a *prima facie* political advantage.

The Turn of 1967: Germany's Role

All the more remarkable, then, that since early 1967 Soviet propaganda for a mutual dissolution of the opposing alliances has been virtually abandoned. The offer was mentioned once more at the conference of European Communist parties held at Karlovy Vary in the spring of 1967, but has not, to the writer's knowledge, turned up in any official Soviet document since that time.[4] Instead, the need to strengthen both the military preparedness and above all the political unity of the Soviet-led alliance in the face of the danger from "West German militarism, revanchism and neo-Nazism" has come to be the predominant concern of Soviet European policy—precisely from the moment that the improvement of relations with the East European Communist states, including the Soviet Union itself, became the priority objective of the new Federal Government of the "Grand Coalition" formed in Bonn in December 1966.

To appreciate the extraordinary nature of the Soviet about-face, it is necessary to recall the main features of Bonn's New Eastern policy.[5] Abandoning the reservations harbored by previous West German leaders against the East-West detente, the new government proclaimed that such a detente, with full participation on Bonn's part, was the only conceivable framework for any approach to eventual German reunification. Accordingly, Bonn offered to establish full diplomatic relations with the Communist governments of Eastern Europe, regardless of the "Hallstein doctrine" (the prior official policy proscribing such relations with any country—save the USSR—that recognized East Germany). Bonn declared solemnly that it regarded the Munich agreement of 1938 as null and void (not from the start, as the Soviet bloc demanded, but because the agreement had been destroyed by Hitler's occupation of the remainder of Czechoslovakia in 1939—a position identical with that of the British government). It maintained the reservation that the frontier with Poland could be finally settled only in a peace treaty, but stopped asserting the continued legal validity of the prewar frontier of 1937. It offered to negotiate practical measures to improve personal, economic and cultural contacts between both parts of Germany through talks at every level, including the ministerial level, with representatives of East Germany—short only of formal recognition according to international law. Finally, it proposed that the NATO allies should negotiate with the Soviets for a mutual reduction of the armed forces stationed in both parts of Germany, and declared itself ready to negotiate a mutual renunciation of the use or threat of force with the Soviet Union and all its allies, including East Germany.

This reorientation of West German policy represented more than a mere adjustment of diplomatic tactics: it was preceded by a steady change in public opinion over several years, and was finally achieved by the entry of the Social Democratic Party into the government. Yet while the new policy was eagerly welcomed by the Communist government of Rumania and aroused considerable initial interest in Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Bulgaria, it was bitterly denounced as a new form of political aggression by the East German and Polish Communists and, after some initial hesitation, by the

[4] The virtual dropping of the offer was publicly deplored by the Italian Communist leader Luigi Longo in a speech to his Central Committee after the invasion of Czechoslovakia: *L'Unità* (Rome), Aug. 30, 1968.

[5] See, for instance, the programmatic declaration of the new government in the Bundestag, Dec. 13, 1966.

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Soviets. The East German leaders feared that any improvement of relations between Bonn and their Communist allies would eventually lead to their own isolation in their artificial German state. The Polish Communists, remembering their recent conflict with the Catholic Church on the possibility of a reconciliation between the German and Polish peoples, were convinced that anything which lessened the fear of Germany would undermine the Polish people's willingness to rely solely on Russian protection, and thereby weaken the basis of their own rule. And the Soviet leaders concluded that Bonn's active participation in the detente was a far greater threat to their own security than its former rigidity, since the proposed rapprochement might isolate their East German bastion, cause differences within their alliance, and reduce the common fear of a new Hitler—the strongest cement binding the alliance at the popular level.

We can now see why Bonn's decision to join the East-West detente without reservations became the catalyst of Moscow's decision to turn away from it. So long as the West was divided on the issue, the Soviets could afford to pose as the champions of detente and the advocates of an eventual dissolution of both opposing alliances: while they felt reasonably assured of their own power sphere—with the peripheral and partial exception of Rumania—they could exploit the differences in the enemy camp through a flexible, offensive policy. But as soon as the evolution of West Germany offered to Russia's client states an alternative to fear, the Soviets, feeling their hold on Eastern Europe threatened, withdrew to a posture of defensive rigidity. Pressure was brought to bear on Czechoslovakia, as well as on Hungary and Bulgaria, to reject Bonn's offer of normal diplomatic relations; the campaign to paint the Federal Republic as a hotbed of neo-Nazi aggression was given preference over the chance to negotiate a mutual renunciation of the use or threat of force, even though Bonn was willing to include East Germany among its partners; and by the end of 1967, the slogan for a "European Security System" was no longer interpreted to mean a continental system of mutual guarantees among equals, but a revived guarantee by the victors of World War II against German militarism on the model of the Potsdam agreement.[6] The men in the Kremlin can hardly have deluded themselves into believing that *this* would appear as an attractive alternative to NATO in Western eyes—but once the preservation of their East European power sphere seemed in doubt, they gave it absolute priority over any further attempts to get NATO dissolved.

The Soviet attitude to the internal changes in Czechoslovakia developed above all in this context. The leaders of the CPSU must have long been aware of the inefficiency and growing unpopularity of the Novotny regime; and they had no inherent reason to oppose either the implementation of the Czechoslovak plan for economic reform or the fulfilment of long-standing pledges to rehabilitate the victims of the terror years. But they were worried by the growing pressure of opinion in Czechoslovakia—voiced by economists, scholars and writers—favoring better relations with Western Germany; and they rightly feared that a reform regime might be more responsive to that pressure than Novotny's bureaucratic leadership. Hence, while avoiding open intervention at this stage, the Kremlin used its influence to back the old incumbents—interfering just enough to arouse resentment, and to make the overthrow of the Novotny team in January 1968 appear as a Soviet setback. In short, the Soviet preoccupation with West Germany stood at the beginning of the chain of events that ended with the Soviet occupation of Czechoslovakia.

Challenge from Within

The above analysis is open to one serious objection: viewed from outside, the sudden turn which the Soviets' European policy underwent in early 1967 appears disproportionate to its immediate cause. After all, Soviet control of Eastern Europe, with the exception of Rumania, had been effectively consolidated in the two years following the fall of Khrushchev: the Rumanian infection had not spread, the military capacity of the Warsaw Pact forces had steadily improved, and there had been visible progress in the coordination of bloc diplomacy with regard to the West in general and to the critical issue of attitudes towards West Germany in particular. So far, then, the conditional offer to dissolve the Warsaw Pact in return for the dismantling of NATO (on the silent understanding that the bilateral treaties between the Soviet Union and its allies would be retained) had proved perfectly compatible with the effective strengthening

[6] *Cf.* the statement of the Soviet government, addressed to the government of the GFR on Nov. 21, 1967, during the confidential discussions on a mutual renunciation of the use or threat of force (published in *Neues Deutschland*, East Berlin, July 13, 1968); the public declaration addressed by the Soviet government to the GFR government on Dec. 8, 1967; and the Soviet *aide-memoire* to the Federal government of July 5, 1968 (*Neues Deutschland*, July 14, 1968).

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of bloc cohesion. Why, therefore, should the Soviets regard the mere beginnings of a new West German policy towards Eastern Europe as sufficient reason to renounce the proven advantages of a flexible diplomacy and to withdraw into the bristling posture of a hedgehog?

The answer seems to be that Bonn's new initiative was merely the catalyst for a change in Moscow's European policy that corresponded to a general tendency then gaining ground within the Soviet leadership—a tendency towards an increasingly rigid disciplinarianism born of a sense of insecurity that had domestic rather than foreign roots.

The team of oligarchs who overthrew N. S. Khrushchev in October 1964 had acted to preserve the stability of their bureaucratic regime from the dangerous experiments of an incalculable, dynamic personality. They were conservatives who wished neither to return to Stalin's more violent forms of experimentation nor to run the risks of a bold policy of liberalization, but simply to hold onto a collective monopoly of control which they regarded as the only guarantee for the steady development of their country's prosperity and power.[7]

Thus, the first concern of the new leaders had been to restore unity and continuity in the party machine and state administration after the Khrushchevian shake-up—to give their bureaucratic constituents renewed security of tenure. Yet within a year, it became obvious that the bureaucratic rule they had successfully defended against arbitrary intervention from above was coming under increasing attack by intellectual critics from below: indeed, these critics were making use of Khrushchev's disclosure of Stalin's crimes to throw doubt on the legitimacy of the whole generation of *apparatchiki* who had been his tools—and were still governing Russia. By the beginning of 1966, the Politburo had decided that the critics must be silenced and the flood of disclosures stopped, if Russia was to be made safe for bureaucracy. The heavy sentences pronounced against Siniavsky and Daniel were one consequence. Another was the new doctrine, endorsed by the 23rd CPSU Congress, that while there had been a "personality cult" leading to crimes during the later years of Stalin's rule, there had never been any "*period* of the personality cult" [8]—in other words, that massive terrorism had been a mere marginal blemish during a glorious period of the construction of socialism, and that all who had risen to the top in that period could be proud of it. The third consequence was a series of measures to strengthen party control over literature and intellectual life in general, to condemn "unpatriotic" writings and stop their publication, and to launch a major campaign for the "military-patriotic education" of Soviet youth; for by then the leaders had apparently come to the conclusion that a chauvinistic glorification of military power was the most promising "ideological" weapon they could use in the struggle against dangerous liberal ideas.

Yet police repression, censorship and official chauvinism were soon to prove as powerless to stop the spread of critical thought in industrial, postrevolutionary Russia under the Communist bureaucracy as they had been in backward prerevolutionary Russia under the Tsarist bureaucracy: by now, persecution merely served to revive the traditions of social responsibility and individual protest among the Russian intelligentsia and the ties of solidarity between critical writers, students, scientists and independent-minded party members.[9] In 1967 and 1968, the Soviet Union was swept by a new wave of unrest, resulting in a series of repressions and trials (fully documented in the preceding two issues of this journal).[9] The official attitude was to treat criticism as a fringe irritant to be dealt with summarily; beneath the surface, however, the leaders were deeply disturbed by these stirrings of a new spirit, as they later admitted at meetings of the Central Committee and the Moscow City Conference of the party in March and April 1968.

It was at home, then, that the collective leadership first came to feel on the defensive against the awakening of new forces resistant to control; and there is good reason to believe that it was the increasingly rigid and conservative frame of mind induced by these developments that caused the leadership to display, from about the beginning of 1967, an anxious authoritarianism in dealing with the outside world that was to lead to a whole series of setbacks. For instance, Russian influence among the Communist parties that wished to remain uncommitted in the Sino-Soviet dispute had grown steadily ever since Moscow, in the spring 1965, had relaxed its pressure for an early Communist world conference; yet now the demand for a Soviet-dominated world conference was revived—and with it

[7] See also R. Lowenthal, "The Revolution Withers Away," *Problems of Communism*, No. 1, 1965; and R. Lowenthal, "The Soviet Union in the Post-Revolutionary Era," in A. Dallin and Th. B. Larson, Eds., *Soviet Politics Since Khrushchev*, Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1968.

[8] The point was first made in *Pravda*, Jan. 30, 1966.

[9] See *Problems of Communism*, Nos. 4 & 5, 1968.

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friction in relations with the "neutral" parties. Again, the Russian warning to Egypt in May 1967 about an imminent Israeli "attack" on Syria, which precipitated Egyptian mobilization and set in motion the chain of events ending in the disastrous June war, seems to have been caused by Moscow's fear that the Israeli reprisal raids on Syria might lead to the overthrow of its shaky protégé government in that country.[10] The excessive fear for the cohesion of the East European alliance displayed by the Kremlin in response to Bonn's new Eastern policy was evidently part of the same syndrome; it was based on the same belief in the pervasive power of "bourgeois ideology" to confuse and divide the peoples under Communist rule and even some Communist parties, and on the same exclusive faith in the remedy of insulating the peoples and parties from that danger by strict Soviet control.

Czechoslovakia in Focus

Given that response, it was natural that the Soviet fear of change in Eastern Europe should focus on Czechoslovakia. As one of the two industrially most advanced countries of the bloc and also one of the two westernmost members bordering West Germany, Czechoslovakia was considered equally vital for the economic division of labor and for the military and political cohesion of the alliance. Accordingly, a major effort had long been made to establish especially close ties between Czechoslovakia, Poland and East Germany, thereby forming an "iron triangle" of hard resistance to Western temptations. Yet while the Novotny leadership had been a willing partner in that Soviet-inspired policy, the spontaneous development of Czech society had tended increasingly in the opposite direction—toward a revived sense of Central European (as distinct from East European) identity in general, and toward closer economic and cultural relations with West Germany in particular. It had not been too difficult for the Soviets, in the early months of 1967, to get Novotny and his team to drop their initial interest in the West German offer of normal diplomatic relations and to sign a new 20-year treaty with the East German regime instead; but Moscow knew well enough that this decision was hardly more popular with the Czech and Slovak intelligentsia, including restive elements in the party, than were

Whose Lenin?—Prague's Comment

—From *Dikobraz* (Prague), Aug. 6, 1968.

the economic and cultural policies of the Czech epigones of the Stalin era. Hence when the Czechoslovak writers' congress—meeting in June 1967, just after the Soviet writers' congress—developed by comparison into a much more open confrontation between the critical writers and their official ideological supervisors, the Kremlin had obvious reasons of both domestic and foreign policy to side with the Novotny leadership; and when the Middle East war further widened the gulf between the Communist governments and the humanistic intellectuals of Eastern Europe in the following months, Moscow fully approved the harsh measures taken by Prague to muzzle and intimidate its nonconformists.

Yet it was these measures that were to precipitate the final crisis of a regime that had long since lost its last ounce of credibility—a crisis that began with the clash between Dubcek and Novotny at the October 1967 plenary session of the CPSC (Czech party) Central Committee. For years the Novotny leadership had "approved" economic reform and delayed its execution, while Czech industry sank deeper and deeper into bureaucratic paralysis; for years the regime had disavowed the bogus Stalinist trials of the early 1950's, while preventing the effective rehabilitation of the starving victims, not to

[10] See the detailed evidence in Walter Laqueur, *The Road to Jerusalem*, New York, 1968, Ch. 3, pp. 77-80.

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mention the exposure and punishment of their torturers; for years Novotny & Co. had declaimed about the equality of the Czech and Slovak peoples yet opposed the Slovaks' concrete demands for more effective self-government. Now, in the face of a challenge made from within the party in the name of truth, they were ideologically bankrupt. Devoid of arguments to fall back on, Novotny fell back on Brezhnev instead, inviting him to the December session of the Central Committee. But the General Secretary of the CPSU, unwilling to expose his authority in a lost cause, could only procure a postponement of the decision to oust Novotny by an appeal for unity. On January 5, 1968, Novotny resigned as party leader, and the CPCS Central Committee elected a new Presidium with Alexander Dubcek as its head.

Caution and Alarm

At first the Soviets took a waiting attitude to the flood of disclosures, reform proposals and ideological discussions about a new model of "humanistic communism." Yet by the end of March, when Novotny had been forced to resign as president and the former collaborators of the Soviet secret police were rapidly losing their positions, the Soviets and their equally conservative East German and Polish allies were thoroughly alarmed by the Czech idea of "democratization" under Communist rule, implying freedom at least of public discussion and dissent, if not of organized opposition. In Poland the Czech developments had inspired student demonstrations supported by leading intellectuals and brought under control only by a combination of police measures, a harsh purge of intellectual life, and an antisemitic press campaign; the latter campaign in turn threatened to undermine Gomulka's position in favor of his anti-liberal but more nationalist rivals of the "partisan" faction. In the Soviet Ukraine, the new climate developing across the Slovak border, communicated through the Ukrainian broadcasts of the Prerov station,[11] was also stimulating discussion among intellectuals, while the East Germans found it necessary to ban the import of Prague's German-language newspaper because it had become too attractive to their own critical subjects. In this climate—and following the first open polemics between the strictly controlled East German and Polish press on one side and the newly freed Czech journals on the other—Dubcek was invited to a discussion at Dresden with the leaders of the "orthodox" parties in the bloc; he went—but failed to reassure them.

For though there was no visible sign of danger to the power of the Czech Communists, and though the Prague leaders affirmed their determination to keep the process of liberalization under control, to permit no opposition parties, and to stay loyal to the Warsaw Pact, they were committing themselves to a concept of free, public debate that had never been tried in any country under Communist rule, not even Tito's Yugoslavia—unless one counts the temporary and reluctant concessions made in Poland in the aftermath of October 1956. The Dubcek regime had already tolerated the use of such freedom by nonparty intellectuals to disclose the past misdeeds of Soviet officials, to criticize the Communist party's monopoly, and to advocate better economic and political relations with West Germany. And it showed signs of regarding a greater degree of diplomatic independence as both compatible with its obligations under the Warsaw Pact and required by the national interest. That such greater independence might well lead to normal relations with the Federal Republic of Germany was suggested not only by the precedent of Rumania, but by Czechoslovakia's economic situtation and by the attitude of her spokesmen at Dresden (and also at subsequent meetings with other leaders of the bloc): for they pressed the Soviets with great urgency for a large, hard-currency credit, and while the Soviets remained unwilling to pledge the amount required without prolonged negotiations, the Czechs were equally unwilling to forego the alternative of obtaining the necessary help from Western sources, which in practice was bound to mean largely from Western Germany.

Growth of a Dilemma

Thus early in April, just when the CPCS Central Committee was adopting its new Action Program, the Soviet leaders decided to mobilize their party against a new main danger: the undermining of the unity of the bloc and of Soviet society by imperialist "ideological subversion." According to a resolution adopted by the CPSU Central Committee on April 10 [12] and to a previous report by

[11] These broadcasts are addressed to the Ukrainian-speaking minority in Eastern Slovakia but are heard in the UkSSR.

[12] *Pravda*, April 11, 1968.

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Brezhnev at a Moscow City conference of the party,[13] the imperialists—while afraid of a direct military clash with Soviet might—were now concentrating on the support of "nationalist and revisionist elements" so as to disrupt the unity of socialist countries. As a result, the "ideological struggle" between the two camps had become far more acute: in fact, it was now "the most critical front of the class struggle." A determined counteroffensive against bourgeois ideology was now the principal task of the ruling Communist parties and the precondition for preserving their power and unity. It was in this context that the CPSU Central Committee was officially informed about the Rumanian walkout from the preparatory world conference of Communist parties in Budapest; about the Rumanian refusal to subscribe to a resolution of unconditional support for the non-proliferation treaty at the Warsaw Pact meeting in Sofia, in early March; and also about the Dresden meeting with the Czechoslovak leaders where the risk of "antisocialist tendencies" arising from Prague's reform course was discussed.

It seems unlikely that armed Soviet intervention —the use of *military* force against the *ideological* danger of "counterrevolution" was formally proposed in Moscow at this early stage, though reports that General Yepishev, the head of the army's political administration, had mentioned the possibility in an unpublished speech began to circulate at the time. But a catalog of demands to the Czech leaders must have been drawn up, and the need to bring pressure to bear in order to "stop the rot" must have been endorsed. Pressure, in fact, became very visible in the course of May, following an inconclusive visit of Dubcek and Premier Cernik to Moscow, and a first collective meeting there of the party and state leaders of the "loyal" allies—without either Czechs or Rumanians present. Resolutions of solidarity with the (supposedly conservative) Czechoslovak workers' militia, adopted at workers' meetings all over the Soviet Union, began to fill the Soviet press, while the first Warsaw Pact maneuvers were started around the borders of Czechoslovakia. It was against this background that Premier Kosygin paid his visit to Prague and Karlovy Vary, obtained the Czech leaders' agreement to a "staff and communications exercise" on their soil, and discussed once again the problem of hard-currency credits as well as the Soviet desire for a permanent stationing of Russian units on the Czech frontier with Western Germany. As no agreement could be reached on the latter two issues, Kosygin was all the more insistent in urging the Dubcek team to slow down their reforms and to unite with the defeated party conservatives against "anti-socialist dangers." In fact, however, the Central Committee meeting held in Prague in the last days of May came out *both* against the danger that the reform might be exploited by enemies of socialism *and* against the continuing efforts of the dogmatists to prevent reform: and it showed the reformers' determination to pursue their course by expelling Novotny from its ranks and calling a party congress for September.

By June, then, the Soviet leaders were conscious of being faced with a major dilemma of policy. If the new Czech leaders continued on their "revisionist" road and consolidated their power, as they seemed determined to do, it was foreseeable that one of the two bloc countries bordering Western Germany would break away from the rigidly negative German policy imposed by Moscow; that one of the industrially most advanced bloc countries would seek to reduce its dependence on Soviet markets and raw materials, improve its technology, and raise its standard of living by accepting a major Western loan; and that the country with the most solid democratic traditions in the bloc would develop a pattern of free discussion and dissent that was not only unprecedented but diametrically opposed to the current trend of Soviet domestic politics. Moreover, it was to be expected that the Czech example, if tolerated, would soon be followed by Hungary, both on the German question and internally, and that its attraction would create so much unrest in Poland and Eastern Germany—not to mention the Soviet Union itself—as to force a reconsideration of the Soviet general line. As the Soviet leaders well knew, the real risk was not that Czechoslovakia might *break away* from the bloc following a "counterrevolution," but that she might *infect* the bloc with the ferment of reform and reorientation.

Non-violent Overthrow?

Thus the Czech experiment had to be stopped. But (so the thinking must have gone) if it could not be stopped by political means, the cost of armed intervention might prove very serious—both outside and inside the bloc. The chances of reunifying the large majority of the world's Communist parties under Soviet leadership at a conference

[13] *Moscow Radio*, March 29, 1968.

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FIRST, THE LIFE of our nation was threatened by the war. Then came blacker days, which threatened our spiritual and national character. Most of the nation accepted and had faith in the new program of socialism, which was taken over by the wrong people. It would not have mattered so much that they lacked the experience of statesmen, the knowledge of scholars or the training of philosophers, if they had allowed themselves to be replaced by more capable persons.

The Communist Party betrayed the great trust the people put in it after the war. It preferred the glories of office, until it had those and nothing more. The disappointment was great among Communists as well as non-Communists. The leadership of the party changed it from a political and ideological group into a power-hungry organization, attracting egotists, cowards and crooks.

They influenced the party's operations to such an extent that honest people could not gain a foothold without debasement, much less make it a modern political instrument. There were many Communists who fought this deterioration but they could not prevent what happened.

The situation in the party led to a similar situation in the state, resulting in the linkage of party and state. There was no criticism of the state and economic organizations. Parliament forgot how to deliberate, the government forgot how to rule and managers how to manage. Elections had no significance and the laws lost their value. We could not trust any of our representatives, and when we could it was impossible to ask them for anything because they were powerless. What made things even worse was that we could not trust each other.

PERSONAL AND COLLECTIVE honor deteriorated. Honesty led nowhere, and it was useless to speak of rewards according to ability. As a result, most citizens lost interest in public affairs. They were concerned only with themselves and with accumulating money. The situation got so bad that now one cannot even rely on money. Relations among people were undermined and joy in work was lost. To sum up, the nation was in a morass that threatened its spiritual health and character.

We are all responsible for the present state of affairs, with the greater responsibility on the Communists among us. But the prime responsibility lies with those who made up the component parts or were the instruments of uncontrolled power, the power of a dogmatic group placed everywhere by the party apparatus, from Prague to the smallest district and community. The apparatus decided what one could or could not do and directed the cooperatives for the cooperative members, the factories for the workers and the national committees for the citizens. No organization was run by its members, not even the Communist party. . . .

The greatest deception of these rulers was that they presented their arbitrariness as the will of the workers. If we believed this, we could now blame the workers for the decline of our economy, for the crimes against innocent people, for the introduction of censorship which made it impossible for all this to be described. The workers would have to be blamed for mistaken investments, for the losses in trade, for the shortage of apartments.

Naturally, no sensible person believes that the workers are guilty of these things. We all know—and each worker knows—that he did not decide anything. Someone else chose the union officials he elected. Power was executed by trained groups of officials loyal to the party and state apparatus. In effect, they took the place of the former ruling class and became the new authority.

In all justice, we can say that some of them [the Communists] did realize what was happening. We know that now because they are redressing wrongs, correcting mistakes, bringing decisions to the membership and the citizens, and limiting the authority and the size of the official apparatus. They no longer support the conservative viewpoint in the party. But there are still many officials opposed to change who exercise the instruments of power, particularly in the districts and in the communities.

Since the beginning of the year we have been in the process of reviving democratization. It began in the Communist party. We must say this. And those non-Communists among us, who, until recently, expected no good to come from the Communists also know it. We must add, however, that this process could not have begun elsewhere. After twenty years, only the Communists had an actual political life; only Communist criticism was in a position to assess things as they were; only the opposition in the Communist Party had the privilege of being in contact with the enemy. . . .

THE PRESENT EFFORT of the democratic Communists is only an installment in the repayment of the debt the entire party owes the people outside the party, who had no political rights. No gratitude is due to the Communist party, although it should probably be acknowledged that it is honestly striving to use this last opportunity to save its own honor and the nation's. . . .

We turn to you [the Communists] in this moment of hope, which is still under threat. It took several months for many of us to believe that they could speak out and many still do not believe it.

Yet, we have not spoken up. All we have to do is complete what we started out to do—humanize this regime. Otherwise the revenge of the old forces will be cruel. We turn to those who have been waiting. The days immediately ahead of us will determine our future course for many years to come. . . . Consensus can only be found if freedom of expression, which happens to be the only democratic achievement of the year, is permitted. In

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the forthcoming days we will have to demonstrate our initiative and determination.

Above all, we will oppose views, should they arise, that it is possible to carry out some type of democratic revival without the Communists—or possibly against them. This would be both unjust and unreasonable. The Communists already have functioning organizations, and we should support their progressive wings. They have experienced functionaries and, last but not least, they hold in their hands the decisive levers of control.

The public has the party's action program before it. Above all, the program equalizes some of the greatest imbalances that exist today. No one else has a comparable program. We must demand that local action programs be submitted to each district and community. These long-awaited steps are routine enough but they are what the situation calls for now.

The party is preparing for the congress that will elect a new Central Committee. Let us demand that it be better than the current one. If the party now says that in the future it wants to base its leading position on the confidence of the citizenry and not on force, let us believe this as long as we can believe in the people whom it is sending as delegates to district and regional conferences.

There are some who have recently become upset because they believe that the course of democratization has ended. This derives from the letdown following the first exciting developments—the surprising revelations, resignations from high places and speeches of unprecedented boldness. The struggle has merely become less evident. The battle is now over the formulation of laws and other practical measures. We must give the minister, prosecutors, chairmen and secretaries time to prove themselves. Moreover, one cannot presently expect more of the central political organs, which have already shown, however unwillingly, surprising virtues.

THE PRACTICAL OUTCOME of democracy in the future depends on what happens in the enterprise—it is the economists who hold the cards. We must seek out good managers and see to it that they are put into leading positions. Compared with the highly industrialized countries, we are all badly paid.

We could demand more money. It can be printed but it depreciates in the printing. Instead, let us demand that directors and chairman explain to us what they want to produce at what price, to whom they want to sell their products and at what price, what the profits are and what part of them is invested in the modernization of production and how much can be distributed.

The newspaper headlines do not reveal the real struggle. On the one hand, the progressives are fighting for democracy and, on the other, the conservatives are fighting to keep their cushy jobs. The workers can intervene in this struggle in a business-like way by choosing the right managers and councils of the enterprises. They will help themselves most if they elect trade union representatives who are capable and honest natural leaders, without regard to party membership.

The central political organs have done all they can up to this point. It is up to us to make new inroads in the districts and communities. Let us demand the resignation of those who have abused their power, who have harmed public property, who have acted dishonestly or cruelly. We must find ways to induce them to leave. Such steps include public criticism, resolutions, demonstrations, collecting funds for their retirement, strikes and boycotts. . . . But we must reject methods which are illegitimate, indecent or gross, since they might prejudice [First Secretary] Alexander Dubcek. We must decry the writing of insulting letters, since they can be exploited by those that receive them. . . .

MANY SUMMER vacationers throughout the republic will be interested in learning about a constitutional solution to the Czech-Slovak question. We consider federation as one means of solving the nationality problem, but this is just one of the important steps toward democratization. . . .

Recently there has been great apprehension that foreign forces may interfere with our internal development. Faced with their superior strength, the only thing we can do is humbly hold our own and not start trouble. We assure the government that we will back it, if necessary even with weapons, as long as the government does what we mandate and assures our allies that we will observe our alliance, friendship and trade agreements.

Excited reproaches and unfounded suspicions make the government's position more difficult, without being of any help to us. We can insure a new balance in our system only by improving internal conditions to such an extent that the revival can be carried to a point where we can elect statesmen who will have sufficient courage, honor and political wisdom to defend such conditions. This, by the way, is the problem of governments in all the small countries of the world.

As at the end of the war, we have been given a great chance once again. We have opportunity to take up a common cause, which for all practical purposes we call socialism, and mold it so that it will correspond to the good reputation we once had and the high esteem in which we held ourselves.

With this we conclude our statement—written at the suggestion of scholars—to the workers, farmers, officials, artists, scientists, technicians and all other citizens. . . .

—From the manifesto written by Czech novelist Ludvik Vaculik, signed by 70 intellectuals and workers; published in Literarni listy (Prague), June 27, 1968.

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later in 1968 would be gone; in fact, the willingness of many important parties to be guided by Moscow might suffer irreparable damage. Moreover, the attraction and influence of the Communists were bound to suffer gravely, at any rate in the Western world and in all those countries where, striving to win power by the "peaceful road," they had promised to tolerate opposition after an electoral victory. More important to the Soviets, there was a risk that the crisis of NATO would be overcome and its vitality wholly or partly restored by the spectacle of Soviet military intervention in the heart of Europe; General de Gaulle's policy would suffer a major setback, and even the prospects of the dialogue with Washington might be affected. But the most serious of all risks was that intervention might actually generalize the crisis within the bloc itself instead of limiting it: if it provoked a popular rising or organized resistance by the Czechoslovak army, who could foresee the consequences in Hungary, or even in Poland or Eastern Germany?

Small wonder, then, that the Soviet leaders hesitated, looking for a way to stop, break up or overthrow the "revisionist" Czech leadership *without* the use of armed force. During June, while the "communications exercise" took place with rather more troops than the Czechs had expected, public attacks in the Soviet press died down; but diplomats and journalists of the Soviet bloc traveled all over Czechoslovakia, trying to feel its pulse, to observe the people's attitude toward the Soviet troops, to get substitute information for the Czech secret police reports that were no longer reaching them—and also to encourage what they still believed to be widespread working-class opposition to the new course. But the results were disappointing—while inside the Soviet Union concern about the Ukrainian echo of the Czech discussions became more acute,[14] and even a leading Russian physicist, Academician Sakharov, referred hopefully to the Czechoslovak example in his now famous memorandum.[15] At the end of the month Soviet alarm reached a new height with the publication in Prague of the "Two-Thousand Words" (see pp. 12-13). That document, though initiated by non-party intellectuals, was not an attack on Communist one-party rule, which its authors recognized as inevitable in the circumstances; it was, however, a call for pressure from below to get the party to purge from all positions of power the men who had been responsible for the country's economic, intellectual and moral decline. The Soviets and their supporters denounced it at once as the "action program of the counterrevolution" and prevailed on the Czech party leaders to repudiate it. But in the following days, the manifesto received strong support from the press and the public, including a large part of the party rank and file; and as the provincial party conferences met on the next two weekends to elect delegates for the national congress, it became apparent that no outside popular pressure would be needed to achieve the substance of the manifesto's demands, because the congress would have a strong majority firmly committed to reform and to thorough overhaul of the leading cadres.

The Warsaw Ultimatum

The basic policy decision to occupy Czechoslovakia rather than allow this trend to continue must have been taken in Moscow at the end of June. Soviet Ambassador Chervonenko delivered a threatening protest in Prague after the publication of the "Two-Thousand Words," and the departure of Soviet forces was delayed after the maneuvers had ended on June 30—because of "misgivings about internal Czechoslovak developments," as the Czech defense ministry later explained. Gromyko's communication of July 1st to the United States stating that the Soviets were ready to negotiate on limitations of the armaments race in long-range missiles and ABM's may have been an outcome of the same decision, intended to minimize its effects on American policy. A few days later, the Soviets broke off discussions with the West German government on an exchange of declarations renouncing the use or threat of force; an *aide-memoire* denying that the German wish to renounce force was trustworthy was handed over in Bonn on July 5, accompanied by emphatic warnings against any continuation of West Germany's attempts to improve relations with her Eastern neighbors. During the same week, the Soviet, Polish, East German, Bulgarian and Hungarian parties addressed separate but coordinated letters to the CPCS Central Committee, urging a joint

[14] The celebrations of the 50th anniversary of the Ukrainian CP were used for attacks against the "social-democratic" idea of a "democratization of socialism" by the Ukrainian Central Committee's First Secretary, Pyotr Shelest (*Radjanska Ukraina*, July 6), and explicitly against the propaganda of such "revisionist" views in Czechoslovakia by the party First Secretary of the Transcarpathian *oblast* bordering the CSSR, Y.V. Ilnitsky, (*Pravda Ukrainy*, June 29).

[15] Text of a version dated June 1968, in *The New York Times*, July 22.

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meeting to discuss the dangers threatening socialism in Czechoslovakia at the earliest possible date. On July 8, the CPSU Presidium—with the maneuver troops still on Czech soil—rejected the proposal as smacking of intervention in Czechoslovakia's internal affairs, though offering to hold bilaterial discussions with each interested party "at an appropriate time." Immediately afterward, a new and more formal invitation, calling for a joint meeting in Warsaw on July 14-15, arrived: this meeting, it was made clear, would take place regardless of whether or not the Czechoslovaks chose to attend. Even before the CPCS Presidium confirmed its rejection of this procedure and its preference for bilateral talks (on July 12), *Pravda* on July 11 published an article that clearly foreshadowed an ultimatum threatening armed intervention. Under the heading, "Attack on the Socialist Foundations," the commentator Alexandrov described the "Two-Thousand Words" as a signal for an organized campaign by "anti-Communist, counterrevolutionary forces" working "in alliance with imperialist reaction," and warned that the Czech counterrevolutionaries were using "more subtle tactics" than their predecessors in Hungary 12 years ago. The implication was that the Soviet Communists had come to regard at least some of Czech reformers *within* the party as more dangerous allies of the imperialist enemy than the one-time leaders of the Hungarian rising *against* the party, and that they were prepared to stamp out the danger by the same measures used in Hungary, even if not provoked by similar events. On the same day, *Izvestia* began to publish the hitherto confidential Soviet memoranda addressed to the West German government during the discussions of a mutual renunciation of force.

The contents of the joint letter to the Czechoslovak Central Committee, drafted at the five-party meeting in Warsaw on July 14-15,[16] corresponded to the Soviet posture already indicated in *Pravda*. The letter began with the now classical formula that the danger threatening the cause of socialism in Czechoslovakia and its allegiance to the "socialist commonwealth" was not an "internal affair," and that the allied countries "could not remain indifferent" to this danger because it constituted a threat to their common security interests. The Czechoslovak party was charged with allowing its leading role to be undermined by tolerating non-Communist organizations, letting control of the mass media slip from its grasp, and—as the most direct threat to bloc security—permitting attempts to revise the bloc's joint policy towards the GDR and to promote a flirtation with the West German revanchists—attempts said to find support in "leading Czech circles." To end a situation in which the "counterrevolution" was said to be seizing position after position, the signatories summoned the Czech party to "attack the rightist and antisocialist forces by mobilizing all means at the disposal of the socialist state" (meaning by police measures and not just by arguments); to suppress the activity of all "antisocialist political organizations" (meaning the recently permitted clubs of non-party intellectuals); to resume party control over all media of mass information; and, above all, to rally the party ranks, in strict conformity with the principle of democratic centralism, "against those who by their activity are aiding the hostile forces" (in other words, to purge the most outspoken party liberals with the help of the conservatives). The alternatives were clear: either the CPCS Central Committee would form a new majority out of conservatives, waverers, and some of the more submissive liberals, and thoroughly revise its policy under the tutelage of its five "allies," or the latter would move in to crush the "counterrevolution," pleading a threat to their security.

Signs of Disagreement

The so-called "Warsaw Letter" was published on the evening of July 17, after approval by a plenary session of the CPSU Central Committee held that day. Though approval was now described as "unanimous," the original decision of the Politburo clearly had not been—as indicated both by the composition of the Soviet delegation to the Warsaw meeting and by the list of speakers at the plenum.[17]

The Warsaw delegation included, besides the "*troika*" of Brezhnev, Kosygin and Podgorny, the Ukrainian First Secretary Piotr Shelest, and K.F. Katushev, who had been appointed secretary in charge of relations with ruling Communist parties at the April CPSU plenum. While the unusual step of sending the head of state along with the leaders of party and government might have been due to the wish to impress the other parties with the seriousness of the Soviet resolve, the inclusion of

[16] Text in *Pravda*, July 18.

[17] Both lists of names are in *Pravda*, July 18.

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Shelest on this occasion was as revealing as the absense of Suslov, the ranking party ideologist who had long exercised overall responsibility for inter-Communist party relations.

As for the plenum proceedings, it was remarkable that Shelest (who had publicly expressed his concern about the danger of "revisionist" demands for democratization in the Ukraine just a few days before [18]) should be the only other member of the Warsaw delegation to speak in the Central Committee discussion of Brezhnev's report; that Yu. V. Ilnitsky, party secretary of the Ukraine's Transcarpathian *oblast* (the Carpatho-Ukraine which be-

[18] See note 14 above.

The Warsaw Letter

The development of events in your country evokes deep anxiety in us. It is our deep conviction that the offensive of the reactionary forces, backed by imperialism, against your party and the foundations of the socialist system in the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic threatens to push your country off the road of socialism and thus jeopardizes the interests of the entire socialist system. . . .

. . . we cannot agree to have hostile forces push your country from the road of socialism and create a threat of severing Czechoslovakia from the socialist community. This is something more than your cause. It is the common cause of our countries, which have joined in the Warsaw Treaty. . . .

You are aware of the understanding with which the fraternal parties treated the decisions of the January plenary meeting of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, as they believed that your party, firmly controlling the levers of power, would direct the entire process in the interest of socialism and not let anti-Communist reaction exploit it to grind its own ax. We shared the conviction that you would protect and cherish the Leninist principle of democratic centralism. . . .

Unfortunately, events have taken another course.

Capitalizing on the weakening of party leadership in the country and demagogically abusing the slogan of "democratization," the forces of reaction triggered off a campaign against the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia and its honest and devoted cadres, clearly seeking to abolish the party's leading role, subvert the socialist system, and place Czechoslovakia in opposition to the other socialist countries. . . .

Anti-socialist and revisionist forces have laid hands on the press, radio and televison, making them a rostrum for attacking the Communist Party, disorienting the working class and all working folk, spewing forth uncurbed anti-socialist demagogy, and undermining friendly relations between the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic and the other socialist countries. . . .

This is precisely why the reaction has been able publicly to address the entire country and to print its political platform under the title of "The 2,000 Words," which contains an outright call for struggle against the Communist Party and constitutional authority, for strikes and disorders. This call represents a serious danger to the party, the national front, and the socialist state, and is an attempt to introduce anarchy. . . . Far from being repudiated, this platform, being so extensively circulated at a responsible moment on the eve of the extraordinary Congress of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, has, on the contrary, found obvious advocates in the party rank and file and its leadership, who second the anti-socialist calls. . . . A situation has thus arisen which is absolutely unacceptable for a socialist country. . . .

Matters have gone so far that the joint staff exercises of our troops, with the participation of several units of the Soviet Army . . ., are being used for groundless accusations of violations of the sovereignty of the CSSR. . . .

Czechoslovakia can retain her independence and sovereignty only as a socialist country, as a member of the socialist community. . . . It is our conviction that a situation has arisen in which the threat to the foundations of socialism in Czechoslovakia jeopardizes the common vital interests of other socialist countries. . . .

Each of our parties is responsible not only to its working class and its people but also to the international working class and the world Communist movement, and it cannot evade the obligations following from this. . . .

That is why we believe that a decisive rebuff to the forces of anti-communism and decisive efforts to preserve the socialist system in Czechoslovakia are not only your task but ours, too.

The cause of defending the power of the working class and of all working people, as well as Czechoslovakia's socialist gains, demands that a bold and decisive offensive should be launched against right-wing and anti-socialist forces; that all the defensive means set up by the socialist state should be mobilized; that a stop should be put to the activity of all political organizations that come out against socialism; that the party should take control of the mass-information media—press, radio, and television—and use them in the interests of the working class, of all working people, and of socialism; that the ranks of the party itself should be closed on the principled basis of Marxism-Leninism; that the principle of democratic centralism should be undeviatingly observed; and that a struggle should be undertaken against those whose activity helps the enemy. . . .

We express the conviction that the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, conscious of its responsibility, will take the necessary steps to block the path of reaction. In this struggle, you can count on the solidarity and all-round assistance of the fraternal socialist countries.

—Excerpt from TASS release, July 18, 1968.

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longed to Czechoslovakia before the war and was annexed by the Soviets in 1945), should also speak, although he is not a member of the Central Committee; that two specialists in the control of Soviet intellectuals—the president of the Academy of Science, M.V. Keldysh, and a secretary of the Union of Soviet Writers, N.M. Gribachev—took the floor in this discussion of Czech affairs; and that both Suslov and B. N. Ponomarev, the secretary responsible for relations with non-ruling Communist parties, were silent—even though the resolution issuing from the session explicitly approved the Politburo's course "in relations with Communist and workers' parties of socialist and non-socialist countries," as well as its conduct of foreign policy in general and its maintainance of bloc unity in

The Prague Reply

The several fears expressed in your letter were also expressed in the resolution of our May plenary session of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia.

However, we see the causes of the conflicting situation mainly in the fact that these conflicts accumulated over the years preceding the January plenary session of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia. . . .

Not even the party itself can remain untouched by internal disputes which accompany the process of unification along the lines of the Action Program. One of the negative aspects of this process is the violation of the principles of democratic centralism in the dealings of some Communists, mainly arising from the fact that for many long years the old party leadership applied bureaucratic centralism and suppressed internal party democracy. . . .

We do not, however, see any realistic reasons for statements calling our present situation counter-revolutionary, for statements about an immediate danger to the basis of the socialist system, for statements that Czechoslovakia is preparing a change in the orientation of its socialist foreign policy, or for statements that there is a concrete danger of separating our country from the socialist society. . . .

The basic orientation of Czechoslovakia's foreign policy was conceived and confirmed at the time of the fight for national liberation and in the process of the socialist reconstruction of our country: it is alliance and cooperation with the Soviet Union and the other socialist countries. We shall strive for a deepening of friendly relations between our allies—the countries of the world socialist system—on the basis of mutual respect, sovereignty and equality, mutual esteem and international solidarity. . . .

We do not hide the fact—and we stated this plainly at the May plenum of the Central Committee—that there exist today tendencies aimed at discrediting the party, attempts to deny it its moral and political right to lead society. But if we ask the question whether such phenomena can be correctly judged as a threat to the socialist system, as a decline of the political role of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia under the pressure of reactionary, counterrevolutionary forces—then we come to the conclusion that this is not so. . . .

In accordance with the resolution of the May plenum of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, a binding political socialist platform of the National Front is being created on the initiative of Communists. All the political components of the National Front adopted the program statement made on June 15, 1968, which clearly accepts the historically won leading role of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia and which expresses the principles of a socialist system and socialist domestic and foreign policy. . . .

There is in our opinion a decisive aspect to the present situation: the rise in authority of the new, democratic policy of the party in the eyes of the broadest masses of the workers and the growing participation of the overwhelming majority of the people. The overwhelming majority of the people of all classes and sectors of our society favors the abolition of censorship and is for freedom of expression.

The Communist Party of Czechoslovakia is trying to show that it is capable of a different political leadership and management than the discredited bureaucratic police methods [of the past]. . . .

At the present time the interests of socialism in our country can be served best by a measure of confidence in the leadership of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia and of full support for its policy by our fraternal parties. For this reason we have proposed, as a prerequisite of successful joint discussions, bilateral meetings of the representatives of our parties. . . .

We discussed the proposals of the five parties to hold a meeting in Warsaw at two sessions of the Presidium of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia—on July 8 and 12. . . . Unfortunately, our meeting of July 12 was superfluous because, regardless of its outcome, the meeting in Warsaw had already been convened for July 14—a fact we learned only through *CETEKA* on the afternoon of July 13, at a time when the representatives of the five parties were already on their way to Warsaw. . . . We think that the common cause of socialism is not advanced by the holding of conferences at which the policy and activity of one of the fraternal parties is judged in the absence of its representatives. . . .

We see it as an important task to hold the bilateral talks which we have proposed in the nearest future. It would then be possible to assess the possibility of a common meeting of the socialist countries and to agree on its program and composition, and the time and place of its convening. . . .

—Excerpts from CETEKA release, July 18, 1968.

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particular. During the days of the Warsaw meeting, Suslov and Ponomarev had been at leisure to receive the French Communist leader Waldeck-Rochet and the two Italian representatives, Pajetta and Galuzzi (who had hurried to Moscow at the news of what was afoot)—and had been so unable to reassure them that the former, returning to Paris on the day of the Central Committee session, launched an appeal for a joint conference of all Communist parties from Eastern and Western Europe in a plain attempt to restrain the Soviets and their supporters at the last moment.[19] Clearly, the Soviets' pre-Warsaw decision had been a victory of both domestic and imperial concerns over ideological principles and internationalist ambitions.

In fact, the imperial element was less in evidence than the domestic during these critical days of July; in particular, the published text of the Warsaw Letter contained no demand for the permanent stationing of Soviet troops on the Czech frontier with Western Germany. But preparations to bring up this issue had by then been made. On July 19th, *Pravda* reported the week-old "discovery" of a cache of US arms near the Czech-German frontier; on the 20th, the Soviet general responsible for Warsaw Pact liaison in Czechoslovakia was changed, amid rumors of Soviet dissatisfaction with the results of the troop maneuvers; and if we can believe unofficial Czech reports, a secret Soviet note, combining a protest against the Czech general Prchlik's public criticism of Warsaw Pact arrangements with a request to place Soviet troops on the West German frontier, was handed to the Czechs on the 22nd or 23rd. The raising of this additional major demand thus seems to have coincided with the agreement to hold a bilateral meeting of the Czechoslovak and Soviet party presidia on Czech soil (announced July 22nd, following a quick succession of exchanges between Prague and Moscow) and with the announcement that the remaining Soviet "maneuver" forces had at last received orders to leave Czechoslovakia.

Cierna: A Stay of Execution

Following the dignified rejection of the Warsaw Letter by the CPCS Presidium (a move unanimously endorsed by a full meeting of the Central Committee, reinforced by newly elected party congress delegates from all parts of the country), the Soviets had first seized on the Czech offer of bilateral talks to suggest a meeting of all members of the leading organs—Politburo and Presidium—of both parties, to be held in the Soviet Union, and had then yielded to Prague's insistence on meeting only in Czechoslovakia and after the departure of the last Soviet troops. As indicated in the *Pravda* editorial accompanying the announcement of the meeting (July 22), the Soviet leaders wished to give their ultimatum a chance to achieve its aim before they decided to implement it: the Soviet citizens were told that the Czech comrades had failed to understand the counterrevolutionary danger in their country, but had shown a desire to improve relations with their allies—hence an attempt to convince them of the error of their ways in a collective, face-to-face discussion could be of great positive significance.

However, the unprecedented journey of the whole Soviet Politburo beyond Soviet frontiers (except for two members left in charge of current party and government business in Moscow) can hardly be explained by the mere desire to drive a wedge into the reformist majority of the Czech leadership through prolonged, intensive pressure; even during the crisis of October 1956, no more than four members of the top Soviet leadership had gone to Poland, and no more than two to Hungary, at any one moment. The only adequate explanation is that the Soviets were conscious a new decision would have to be made at the end of the talks—the decision whether to regard their demands as satisfied, or whether to implement the ultimatum by giving marching orders to the allied armies, kept in a state of readiness all around Czechoslovakia. Moreover, the members of the collective knew that some of them would apply more exacting standards of compliance than others, and they evidently could not agree on trusting a single leader, or even a *troika*, with deciding in their name. They seem to have settled in advance on a precise list of maximum demands, spelling out in detail the generalities of the Warsaw Letter—but not on their course of action in case the Czech majority failed to accept the demands *en bloc* or to split up over the issue.

In fact, no agreement could be reached at Cierna-nad-Tisou on the major premise of the Warsaw Letter, since the Czech leaders countered talk about the danger of counterrevolution with evidence of the growing national unity around their party; and when Brezhnev tried to present a list of "rightists" to be purged from responsible party positions,

[19] *L'Humanité* (Paris), July 18, 1968.

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Dubcek is reliably reported to have refused even to listen to such attempts at detailed interference in Czechoslovak affairs, forcing an interruption of the talks. Moreover, though at least one conservative member of the CPCS Presidium is believed to have sided openly and unreservedly with the Soviets, the visitors failed to win over any of the supposed waverers or to break up the liberal majority. Faced with the stark issue of having to use armed force against a solidly entrenched and popular Communist leadership, the Russians were the ones to waver—and in this situation Dubcek's willingness to give them general as distinct from specific assurances seemed to offer them a way out. Here lies the root of the later conflict between the Soviet claim that the Czechs had "broken agreements reached at Cierna," and the Czech denial that any formal agreements had been concluded: the Czech leaders concluded no written agreement, but they made a declaration of intent—and they suggested, as an earnest of their loyalty, that the Russians should draft a formula for the six-party meeting at Bratislava on that basis.

Yet in agreeing to this procedure, the Russians did not really declare themselves satisfied—nor did they drop the ultimatum. The Bratislava communiqué [20] did not repeat the charge about counterrevolutionary dangers in Czechosolovakia, but neither did it withdraw it: it made no explicit mention of Czechoslovakia at all. Instead, it committed all the signatories—once more in general terms—to the defense of the socialist achievements of the past (including the Stalinist period); to observance of the "general laws of socialist construction" (as defined at the Moscow conference of 1957), including the leading role of the Communist party and the principle of "democratic centralism"; to irreconcilable struggle against "bourgeois ideology" and "antisocialist forces" bent on undermining the socialist system or driving a wedge between the socialist states; and to ever closer cooperation in the Council for Mutual Economic Aid (Comecon) and the Warsaw Pact, and at the forthcoming Communist world conference. More specifically, it contained—along with obligations to support "the Vietnamese people" and erase "the consequences of Israeli aggression"—a pledge "to follow consistently a concerted policy in European affairs in line with the common interests of the socialist countries" against the forces of revanchism in Western Germany. And, most crucial of all, it argued that "the many-sided tasks of creating a socialist society in each of our countries are easier to solve with mutual help and support," and defined as the basis for the cooperation of the signatories "the principles of equality, respect for sovereignty and national independence, territorial integrity, and *fraternal mutual assistance and solidarity*"—with the words here italicized taking the place traditionally reserved for "non-interference in each other's internal affairs."

Thus, while the Czechoslovaks felt they had successfully buried the Warsaw Letter and reasserted their national sovereignty and internal autonomy, the Soviet Politburo's real decision at the end of the Cierna talks had been neither to withdraw their ultimatum nor to implement it at that stage, but to tie the Czechoslovak party to a platform which, in their eyes, would decisively strengthen the conservative opponents of Dubcek: for in demanding a change of policy, they could now cite as authority not only the views of the Soviet and East European comrades but a document signed by the liberal Czechoslovak leaders themselves. All that remained to be done was to test the new formula in practice: either the Dubcek team would carry it out and thus turn against its more consistently revisionist supporters, or it would fail to do so and would then be overthrown by the party—if necessary with the "help and support" from Czechoslovakia's allies which by its signature it had admitted to be legitimate.

In short, this second Soviet decision was neither a true reversal of the first, as the Czechoslovaks believed at the time, nor a mere smokescreen for continuing military preparations, as some of them felt afterwards: it was an attempt to improve the ideological basis for making invasion either unnecessary or less risky, and thus to postpone the final choice. To this limited extent, it was more "moderate" than the first decision: it showed the handwriting of Suslov—who was as conspicuous by his activity at Cierna and Bratislava as he had been by his absence at Warsaw—and reflected his belief in the magic power of ideological formulations to mold the policy of Communist parties in any situation. For the moment, it served to paper over the differences not merely between Russians and Czechoslovaks, but within the Russian delegation: for while Suslov and the "conciliators" presumably hoped that it would help to avoid the odium of military action, the hardliners were certainly more skeptical. The same division of opinion was discernible among the allied delegations at Bratislava before the communiqué was signed:

[20] Text issued by TASS, Aug. 3, 1968.

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Kadar welcomed it with relief, but Gomulka and Ulbricht did not bother to disguise their fury and disappointment at the Soviets' hesitation.[21] What, they seem to have asked, was the point of granting another period of probation to a Czechoslovak leadership that had plainly refused to purge the open revisionists, to restore censorship, or to accept permanent Soviet garrisons on its frontier with West Germany?

The Road to Invasion

Within a few days after the Bratislava meeting it became clear that the Dubcek team interpreted the results of the Cierna and Bratislava talks in a very different manner from the Soviets. The Czechoslovak leaders felt that they had made no concessions of substance, that they had merely explained why their policy was in harmony with basic Communist principles, and that they were free to continue on their course—while taking care to avoid unnecessary polemics that might provoke their allies.[22] To them, assuring the leading role of the Communist party meant assuring its support by the people, rather than suppressing all independent organizations; struggle against anti-socialist elements meant political rebuttal, not police measures and purges; party control of the press meant guidance and education of inexperienced but loyal editors, not censorship. While the Bratislava communiqué had stressed the importance of democratic centralism in the party, it had also approved steady progress in democratization; while it had talked of a concerted policy against West German militarism, revanchism and neo-Nazism, and of support for the East German state and the West German Communists, it had added—at Czech request—a declaration of support "to all forces which fight against militarism and revanchism and for democratic progress": did this not justify cooperation with the German Social Democrats? Indeed, the Bratislava text was ambiguous on a number of points; the error of the Czech leaders consisted in believing that it was for them to interpret it.

Thus in welcoming the result of the talks as a "success for all sides," the CPCS Presidium announced no change of policy; it merely appealed to all journalists to stop polemics and act responsibly in the national interest.[23] The advice was largely followed by the mass media, including the daily press, but the intellectual journals continued to publish critical analyses of the pressure to which the country had been subjected in the preceding weeks. There were other causes of friction which the leadership did not desire but could not eliminate at once. For example, on July 30, the second day of the Cierna talks, *Pravda* had published a letter from 99 workers of a Prague car factory welcoming the protection of Czechoslovakia by Soviet troops; it turned out that they were a group of militia officials who had signed the letter without consulting the thousands of other workers—while the plant was closed for summer holidays. Now the workers were back and demanded the dismissal of the "traitors"; the party Presidum rejected the demand as undemocratic, but the damage was done —the Soviet press could report a "witch-hunt" against "loyal, pro-Soviet workers." Less spectacular, but probably more important in shaping the Soviet leadership's view of the trend of developments, was the publication on August 10 of the draft of the new CPCS statute to be presented to the party congress in September: it provided for election of all party officials by secret ballot, and it redefined "democratic centralism" to permit continued advocacy of minority views *after* a policy decision if new supporting evidence could be presented. To the rulers of the Soviet bloc, this must have appeared as outright defiance of Leninist principles.

The persistence of sharp divergence became apparent just as quickly in the field of foreign policy. The visits of Czechoslovakia's closest supporters, Yugoslavia's Marshal Tito and Rumanian party secretary Ceausescu, which had been postponed at Prague's request during the July crisis, now took place on August 9-10 and 15-16 respectively, and were turned into demonstrations of solidarity and independence not by the Prague leaders, but by the Czech people. The principle of non-interference in each other's internal affairs, missing from the Bratislava communiqué, was

[21] For Kadar's attitude, see David Binder in *The New York Times*, Aug. 25, quoting reliable East European sources in Bonn; for the reaction of Gomulka and the East German leaders, see Philippe Ben in *Le Monde* (Paris), Aug. 22, quoting East European diplomats at the UN.

[22] *Cf.* the radio addresses by President Svoboda on Aug. 1 and party First Secretary Dubcek on Aug 2, as well as the interview by Premier Cernik in *Rude pravo* (Prague), Aug. 2, all insisting that Czech reform policy would continue unchanged, that the Warsaw Letter was dead, and that only questions concerning bloc cooperation would be discussed in Bratislava on Aug. 3.

[23] In a resolution of August 6, broadcast by *Radio Prague*, Aug. 7.

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stressed both in Tito's press conference and in the bilateral treaty signed by Czechoslovakia and Rumania, at a time when the Rumanian treaty with the Soviet Union remained conspicuously unsigned. The specter of a "Communist Little Entente" directed against Soviet hegemony must have loomed before the Russians' eyes. Meanwhile Ulbricht had returned from his visit to Karlovy Vary on August 12 empty-handed—without new, written assurances on the "struggle against anti-socialist forces," witout any progress on the stationing of allied troops on Czechoslovakia's West German frontier, and above all without the pledge he had sought binding Prague to "prior consulation" with East Berlin in any future initiatives toward West Germany.[24]

In short, the range of continuing conflict between Prague on one side and Moscow and its allies on the other revealed itself so quickly and in such breadth that it seems pointless to ask which particular issue precipitated the third Soviet decision—the final turn to invasion. The majority of the Politburo was probably not surprised at Prague's unrepentant attitude, and the Soviet and allied troops had been kept on the ready through a new series of maneuvers in Czechoslovakia's neighborhood. What the optimists among the Soviet leadership were waiting for was not a sign of conversion on the part of Dubcek and his friends, but a sign of growing opposition from within the Czechoslovak party, including its Presidium and Central Committee; and we may assume that the sign duly came. After all, the remaining dogmatists in those bodies had everything to lose if the new course was approved by the party congress in September, and thus had as vital an interest as the Soviets in overthrowing the reformers before that date; in the case of Bilak, the Slovak secretary who had taken the Soviet side at Cierna, the critical date was even closer because of the decision to hold the Slovak congress first, at the end of August. The leading dogmatists were in constant contact with the unhappy Soviet Ambassador in Prague, Chervonenko; and the latter, a man of limited intelligence, seems to have transmitted to his superiors their conviction that discontent and anxiety about the leadership's failure to fight the "counterrevolutionary danger" were rapidly growing within the party, and that decisive "socialist assistance" in the form of military intervention would quickly be welcomed by a reversed majority—once the troops were present.[25]

It was this assurance—rather than some particular outrage on Dubcek's part or some sudden act of independence by the Soviet marshals—that was crucial in triggering the Politburo's decision. Within a week after Bratislava, it had been clear that the Dubcek leadership was unwilling to mend its ways, hence that intervention would be necessary to prevent the disintegration of the bloc and the spread of "revisionism" in the Soviet Union itself. But the purpose of intervention was to quell unrest, not to produce a general flare-up; and this result could only be guaranteed if the *fait accompli* was accepted by the legitimate organs of the Czechoslovak party and by a reconstructed legal government. If the latter could be accomplished, it would also greatly reduce the damage to Soviet influence among the non-ruling Communist parties—an important, though secondary, consideration.

The decision to invade must have been taken between the 10th and the 17th of August. Most Politburo members were officially on vacation after August 6 and only returned to Moscow on the 16th; but they may have been meeting in Yalta (where Kadar is said to have gone in an effort to dissuade them), communicating from there with their colleagues in Moscow—there are reports, in any event, that Soviet units in East Germany got their marching orders on the 14th. Soviet press attacks on Czechoslovakia were resumed by *Literaturnaia gazeta* on the 14th and by *Pravda* on the 16th, causing growing anxiety in Prague by the end of the week. The highest Soviet military leaders visited East Germany and Poland on the 15th and 16th, presumably to give instructions to the Soviet units there for conducting a surprise occupation by night, spearheaded by mass landings at Prague airport so as to minimize the risk of armed resistance. Obtaining the cooperation of the Poles, East Germans and Bulgarians was a mere formality in the circumstances. The reluctant Kadar, eager for mediation to the last, was allowed to meet Dubcek on the 17th, to remonstrate with him about his failure to fulfill his "promises," and to present some final demands—notably the dismissal of the two most outspoken "revisionists" in the top leadership,

[24] *Cf.* the account of *Neues Deutschland*, Aug. 25, the East Berlin dispatch of David Binder in *The New York Times*, Aug. 28, and the statement by the former Austrian Foreign Minister Bruno Kreisky quoting East European diplomatic sources, in *Frankfurter Rundschau*, Sept. 23.

[25] According to Michel Tatu in *Le Monde*, Sept. 24, Suslov is said to have blamed Chervonenko's reports for misleading the Politburo.

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Cisar and Kriegel, and the stationing of Soviet troops on the West German frontier—which were bound to be rejected; but Kadar was *not* authorized to disclose that invasion was imminent.[26] Two final communications went out from Moscow on August 19: the first, intended to minimize the international reprecussions of the invasion, was addressed by Premier Kosygin to President Johnson, informing him of his readiness for the summit meeting the President desired, and suggesting an announcement for August 21st, which the sender knew to be the morrow of the invasion; the second, intended to strengthen the hands of the dogmatists in Prague, was addressed by General Secretary Brezhnev to Dubcek and accused him of failure to act in the spirit of the Cierna understanding and the Bratislava communiqué—but harsh as the indictment was, it did not mention the impending occupation either.[27]

Blundering to Success

The political preparation for the invasion, then, was in its way as thorough as the military preparation. The Soviets knew that the Czechoslovak party Presidium would be in session on the evening of August 20 to discuss the plans for the party congress; they knew that Dubcek would be obliged to inform the meeting of Brezhnev's letter; and they also knew that Alois Indra, one of the "dogmatist" leaders who was still a Central Committee secretary, would submit to this meeting a draft declaration "reviewing evidence of anti-Communist propaganda and proposing measures to suppress it."[28] They were confident—on the basis of their information—that the Presidium would accept this new platform, after the arrival of the allied forces if not before; that Dubcek would be placed in a minority if he did not submit; and that the new majority would welcome their "assistance" in the form of occupation. It was for this reason that they did not arrive with a ready-made "Quisling government"; that no Politburo representative came to Prague with the troops in order to form one; and that the Central Committee building was not occupied for several hours, while Ambassador Chervonenko waited for good news from his friends there.[29] But the political plan went wrong: the party Presidium in Prague rejected the Indra resolution, reacted to the first news of the occupation with a solemn protest, and continued its session. Only then did the troops receive the order to arrest Dubcek, Cernik, and Smrkovsky. It is revealing that the Soviet announcement of the invasion and the Soviet comments on August 21 still contained no personal attack on Dubcek, while the paragraph of the East German announcement accusing him and his group of responsibility was only given to the press in the early morning of the 21st, after hours of waiting for news of the Czechoslovaks' submission.[30] In the first Soviet indictment mentioning his name—a two-page editorial published by *Pravda* on August 22—Dubcek figures as leader of a "right-wing minority" in the Czechoslovak leadership conducting treacherous intrigues —a reflection of the analysis and expectations that had guided Soviet political planning, though not of Czech reality.

It remains a puzzle just who gave the order to arrest the three top leaders of the Czechoslovak Communist party, government and National Assembly—surely the kind of snap decision that can hardly have been made by a collective. At any rate, it compounded the failure of advance political planning, and the next few days were characterized by confusion and increasing frustration on the Soviet side. Ambassador Chervonenko was now instructed to negotiate with President Svoboda on the appointment of an alternative government with the broadest possible pro-Soviet base; pending this, the names of the "party and government leaders" said to have asked for Soviet occupation had to be withheld—not, according to the foregoing, because there weren't any, but to give them room for maneuver in the hope that their number might grow. Yet by the second day of the occupation Svoboda had refused to replace the arrested leaders, while the "secret" party congress and the protest of the National Assembly had shown the isolation of the would-be collaborators. It seems that the latter, too, were unwilling to form a government that could derive no appearance of legitimacy from either the party, the National Assembly, or the

[26] See David Binder's report in *The New York Times* of Aug. 25, cited in note 21, and the account of Stanislav Budin, editor of the Prague Reporter, in *Le Monde*, Aug. 28.

[27] See *The New York Times* of Aug. 24, quoting highly placed East European sources in Prague, and the confirmation in Budin's account cited in note 26.

[28] See Budin's account cited in note 26.

[29] *Ibid.*; see also Vincent Buist's report from Prague, *The New York Times*, Aug. 29.

[30] According to an editor of *Neues Deutschland*, as quoted by Arno Hahnert in *Die Zeit* (Hamburg), Sept. 6.

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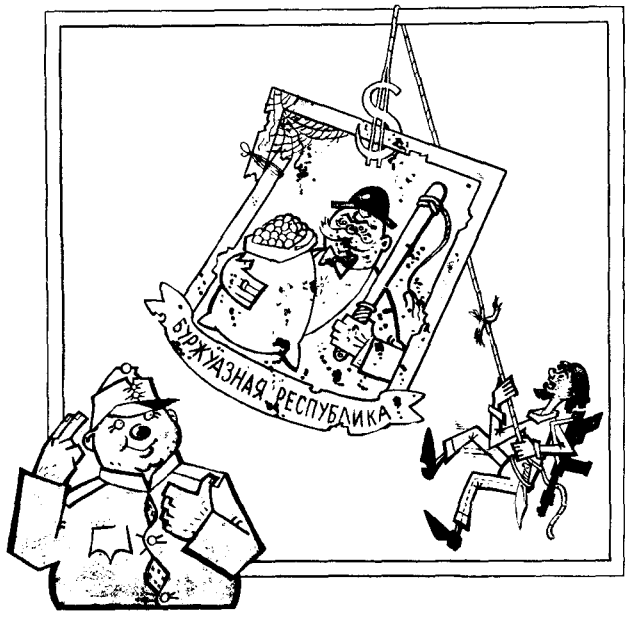

— Так что, осмелюсь доложить, кое-кто пытался вытащить со свалки еще один портрет, засиженный мухами!

Рисунок Ю. ФЕДОРОВА

SCHWEIK IN SOVIET EYES

Caption (spoken by figure representing Czechoslovakia's "Good Soldier Schweik"): "I respectfully report that somebody tried to pull one more portrait soiled by the flies out of the garbage dump." (Label on portrait: "Bourgeois Republic.")

—From *Krokodil* (Moscow), No. 27, 1968.

President; and when Svoboda, recognizing that no Soviet representative in Prague had authority to make a new decision, offered to go to Moscow on the third day, the suggestion was eagerly accepted by the Soviets, who stipulated only that both the leading men of "their" wing—Indra and Bilak—and some presumed waverers should accompany him. Yet within hours of his arrival in Moscow, it must have become clear to the Politburo that the old man would not negotiate without his arrested comrades, and that there simply was no way of forming a legitimate Czechoslovak government and party leadership without them. Hence the decision to bring the arrested men to Moscow to join in the discussion on Saturday August 24—the fourth day of the occupation—in fact anticipated the decision to reinstate them if they would accept office under the occupation—the agreement which emerged at the end of the talks two days later. It was the fourth major policy decision of the Moscow collective since the beginning of the crisis: it amounted to renouncing, for the time being, the objective of breaking up the Czechoslovak leadership rather than renouncing formal legitimacy—provided that the other original objectives of the occupation, such as the permanent stationing of Soviet troops on Czechoslovakia's West German frontier, the reimposition of censorship, and a purge of the most outspoken liberals from sensitive positions, could now be forced on the leaders by the physical presence of Soviet might.

This fourth decision, then, was a partial retreat by the Soviets and was widely regarded as a setback to their prestige. For days afterwards, continued attacks on the reinstated leaders in the press of the occupying countries (Polish and East German papers even talked of the Czechoslovak party having fallen under the control of "Zionists" [31]) showed the degree of continuing confusion in the Soviet camp. But for the Russians, the preservation of legitimacy, even at the price of prestige, had the overriding merit of both removing the basis for further debate in the United Nations—where the Czechoslovak Foreign Minister was now instructed by his government to drop the case—and above all ending the organized resistance of the Czechs and Slovaks, with its still unforeseeable risks.

In opposition to this decision, the hardline critics in the occupying countries may well have argued that it could prove to be another dangerous and sham compromise; that the Czech leaders, having obtained recognition of their Communist *bona fides* and their indispensable legitimacy as representatives of the will of their party, might fail to comply with Soviet directives and still have to be replaced by force; and that the Soviets could then no longer claim to be acting by invitation. But the Kremlin seems to have calculated that while it had been forced for the moment to deal with the rightful leaders of Czechoslovakia, the latter had been forced to take the first step toward recognizing the superior right of occupation, and that time and the weight of the Soviet physical presence would gradually push them farther along that road. And this time, the Soviets did *not* miscalculate.

For ever since the unique negotiation between jailers and prisoners in Moscow during August 24-26, the relation between the reinstated Czech leaders and the Soviets has been more and more determined by the harsh facts of military power—despite the astonishing moral solidarity shown by the Prague leadership and the solid, disciplined support

[31] *Neues Deutschland*, Aug. 25; Major-General Jan Czapla, in *Trybuna Ludu* (Warsaw), Aug. 25; Polish Television, Aug. 26.

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given it by the people. Once the Soviets had to abandon their claim to be in Czechoslovakia at the request of the true majority of Communists, they went further in dropping pretenses: with the risk of popular insurrection or armed resistance gone and world attention no longer focused on Czechoslovakia, they decided they could afford to proclaim their own right to decide when the common interests of socialism were in danger in any allied country, and to use military intervention to forestall such danger—in open defiance both of the "classless" norms of international law and of the democratic principle of self-determination.

Doctrine and Reality

This "Brezhnev doctrine," first formulated in a *Pravda* commentary on September 26 and repeated with the full authority of the Soviet government by Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko before the UN Assembly on October 3, amounts to denying in principle the sovereignty of any "socialist" country accessible to the Soviet Union. In its blunt assertion of a region-wide right to intervention, it has been compared not only to the Monroe Doctrine but also, with greater justice, to the Holy Alliance between the Tsar and the monarchical rulers of Austria and Prussia. Its long-term international consequences are likely far to exceed its immediate purpose and the foresight of the men who decided to announce it, but it has certainly eased their task in the present Czechoslovak situation. For as the cooperation of the legitimate Czech leaders became less important to an occupying power no longer ashamed to rely on naked force, each new conflict over particular Soviet demands was bound to end in further reluctant concessions by the Czechoslovaks—to the point where at present the right of the Soviets to keep military troops in Czechoslovakia without a fixed time limit is recognized by treaty,[32] while the Czechs' right to continue their program of reform is no longer accepted by the Soviets even in words, and the eventual disintegration both of the reform leadership and of the popular spirit of legitimate resistance seems inevitable.

On the whole, then, the Soviets would seem to have achieved their principal objectives: they have broken the élan of independence that threatened the cohesion of the bloc at a vital point, as well as the élan of reform that had become a dangerous example for "revisionist" critics of their own regime at home. Given the character and interests of that regime, the invasion and occupation of Czechoslovakia, for all the blunders of detail that occurred in its preparation and execution, cannot therefore be judged a blunder from the Soviet point of view—the less so because the Soviets succeeded in keeping the total political cost of the operation lower than might have been expected.

They have succeeded, first of all, in snuffing out the flame of freedom in Czechoslovakia without provoking a conflagration—without a major, Hungarian-type upheaval, and without open crises in any of the allied countries participating in the occupation. They have succeeded, secondly, in limiting the damage to their world position and to East-West relations in particular. After some acutely embarrassing days in the Security Council, a full-scale debate in the UN Assembly was avoided. The United States did not fall for the suggestion that agreement on a summit meeting be announced on the morrow of the invasion, but they hastened to make clear that their interest in bilateral negotiations between the superpowers remained unaffected in principle. Even the revival of solidarity among the European members of NATO, though visible, has so far brought few tangible results, and the setback suffered by General de Gaulle has made him no more amenable to the needs of broader political unity in Western Europe.

Only in relation to the Communist parties outside the Soviet bloc has the reverse been severe. The plan for a Communist world conference had to be shelved indefinitely following the bitter protests of the leading non-ruling Communist parties of Europe and Asia, and the gulf that has been opened here may well prove lasting. But there is good reason to surmise that the Kremlin leaders and their closest associates in the bloc calculated this price in advance and consciously decided that, for a post-revolutionary empire, the loss of the remnants of its revolutionary halo in the outside world was a lesser evil than the progressive loss of its own cohesion and discipline. Or, in the words with which Gomulka is said to have replied to a Polish Communist journalist who expressed worry about the consequences for the Communist movement in the West: "A sparrow in the cage is worth a canary on the roof." [33]

[32] The treaty was signed by Kosygin and Cernik in Prague on October 16.

[33] Quoted in a Warsaw dispatch to *The New York Times*, Aug. 28.

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The "Brezhnev Doctrine"

In connection with the events in Czechoslovakia, the question of the relationship and interconnection between the socialist countries' national interests and their internationalist obligations has assumed particular urgency and sharpness. The measures taken jointly by the Soviet Union and other socialist countries to defend the socialist gains of the Czechoslovak people are of enormous significance for strengthening the socialist commonwealth, which is the main achievement of the international working class.

At the same time it is impossible to ignore the allegations being heard in some places that the actions of the five socialist countries contradict the Marxist-Leninist principle of sovereignty and the right of the nations to self-determination.

Such arguments are untenable primarily because they are based on an abstract, non-class approach to the question of sovereignty and the right of nations to self-determination.

There is no doubt that the peoples of the socialist countries and the Communist parties have and must have freedom to determine their country's path of development. However, any decision of theirs must damage neither socialism in their own country, nor the fundamental interests of the other socialist countries, nor the world-wide workers' movement, which is waging a struggle for socialism. This means that every Communist party is responsible not only to its own people but also to all the socialist countries and to the entire Communist movement. Whoever forgets this is placing sole emphasis on the autonomy and independence of Communist parties, lapsing into one-sidedness, and shirking his internationalist obligations. . . .

Each Communist party is free to apply the principles of Marxism-Leninism and socialism in its own country, but it cannot deviate from these principles (if, of course, it remains a Communist party). In concrete terms this means primarily that no Communist party can fail to take into account in its activities such a decisive fact of our time as the struggle between the two antithetical social systems—capitalism and socialism. This struggle is an objective fact that does not depend on the will of people and is conditioned by the division of the world into the two antithetical social systems. . . .

It should be stressed that even if a socialist country seeks to take an "extrabloc" position, it in fact retains its national independence thanks precisely to the power of the socialist commonwealth—and primarily to its chief force, the Soviet Union, and the might of its armed forces. The weakening of any link in the world socialist system has a direct effect on all the socialist countries, which cannot be indifferent. Thus, the antisocialist forces in Czechoslovakia were in essence using talk about the right to self-determination to cover up demands for so-called neutrality and the CSSR's withdrawl from the socialist commonwealth. But implementation of such "self-determination," *i.e.*, Czechoslovakia's separation from the socialist commonwealth, would run counter to Czechoslovakia's fundamental interests and would harm the other socialist countries. Such "self-determination," as a result of which NATO troops might approach Soviet borders and the commonwealth of European socialist countries could be dismembered, in fact infringes on the vital interest of these countries' peoples, and fundamentally contradicts the right of these peoples to socialist self-determination. The Soviet Union and other socialist states, in fulfilling their internationalist duty to the fraternal peoples of Czechoslovakia and defending their own socialist gains, had to act and did act in resolute opposition to the antisocialist forces in Czechoslovakia. . . .

The assistance given to the working people of the CSSR by the other socialist countries, which prevented the export of counterrevolution from the outside, is in fact a struggle for the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic's sovereignty against those who would like to deprive it of this sovereignty by delivering the country to the imperialists.

Over a long period of time and with utmost restraint and patience, the fraternal Communist parties of the socialist countries took political measures to help the Czechoslovak people to halt the antisocialist forces' offensive in Czechoslovakia. And only after exhausting all such measures did they undertake to bring in armed forces.

The allied socialist countries' soldiers who are in Czechoslovakia are proving in deeds that they have no task other than to defend the socialist gains in that country. They are not interfering in the country's internal affairs, and they are waging a struggle not in words but in deeds for the principles of self-determination of Czechoslovakia's peoples, for their inalienable right to decide their destiny themselves after profound and careful consideration, without intimidation by counterrevolutionaries, without revisionist and nationalist demagoguery.

Those who speak of the "illegality" of the allied socialist countries' actions in Czechoslovakia forget that in a class society there is and can be no such thing as non-class law. Laws and the norms of law are subordinated to the laws of the class struggle and the laws of social development. These laws are clearly formulated in the documents jointly adopted by the Communist and Workers' parties.

The class approach to the matter cannot be discarded in the name of legalistic considerations. Whoever does so forfeits the only correct, class-oriented criterion for evaluating legal norms and begins to measure events with the yardsticks of bourgeois law. . . .

There is no doubt that the actions taken in Czechoslovakia by the five allied socialist countries in Czechoslovakia, actions aimed at defending the fundamental interests of the socialist commonwealth and primarily at defending Czechoslovakia's independence and sovereignty as a socialist state, will be increasingly supported by all who really value the interests of the present-day revolutionary movement, the peace and security of peoples, democracy and socialism.

—Excerpt from Sergei Kovalev's article in Pravda, Sept. 26, 1968.

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A Turning Point

The importance of some of the turning points in history is not to be measured by their immediate effects. Rather, by shedding a sudden, dramatic light on changes that have been taking place gradually without attracting much notice, they force a reorientation of minds that is bound to give rise to other changes in the long run. The occupation of Czechoslovakia, just because it came as a surprise to a world that should have expected it, is likely to prove a turning point in that sense. For it illuminates, more than any single previous event, the growing divergence between the development of the postrevolutionary Soviet empire and the political needs of Communist movements outside it.

For the Communist parties outside the Soviet bloc, this is the fourth of a series of major disorienting shocks that began with Khrushchev's secret speech of February 1956, followed by the Hungarian revolution and the Sino-Soviet split. The present shock lies not merely in the simple fact that the invasion of one socialist country by others has proved possible—a matter of quite immediate concern to Rumania and Yugoslavia, as well as to Albania and even China—nor in the contemptuous manner in which the warnings of many of the most loyal Communist parties have been brushed aside. It lies above all in the new "Brezhnev doctrine" proclaimed by the Soviets in justification of the invasion—the assertion of the Soviet Union's claim to the right of intervention in any country governed by Communists so as to control its foreign policy and to prevent toleration of free public debate. The first part is unacceptable to any Communist party aspiring to national independence, and it has already led to a reinforcement of military defense and a sharp diplomatic reorientation on the part of Yugoslavia, to Albania's formal withdrawal from the Warsaw Pact, and to threats of counteraction by China. The second is intolerable for any party operating in a democracy and seeking to convince its voters and potential allies that it will respect elementary political rights after a victory achieved by the "peaceful road." The question is not so much whether the Communists of Italy, France, India, Japan or Chile can find some formula for resigning themselves to the final results of the occupation, as it is whether they can continue to compete for power by democratic means without repudiating the *principle* on which the occupation rests: namely, that the defense of socialism requires the suppression of free public debate, even 20 years after the seizure of power in an advanced country with democratic traditions; and that the Soviet Union will be entitled to intervene to enforce this principle once any party gains control of the government. Detachment from some aspects of Soviet domestic policy has been the practice of these parties for some time, but it will no longer be enough: they will now have to proclaim a concept of socialism different from that of the Soviets and will have to reject Moscow's "hegemonistic" claims, as the Yugoslavs have done —or else face the end of their prospects of ever coming to power by democratic means.

For the East European Soviet bloc, the invasion and the Brezhnev doctrine mean the reversal of the trend towards "desatellitization" started under Khrushchev. In Stalin's time, the Communist states of Eastern Europe were satellites because their regimes depended on the Soviet Union not only for protection against external enemies but also for their domestic power; conversely, it was understood that a change of domestic regime in any of them would have been a *casus foederis*. After Stalin's death, however, the growing scope for domestic autonomy granted to these regimes, by enabling them to win broader popular support, gave most of them a chance to emancipate themselves from satallite status and become in fact weak but semi-independent allies of the Soviet Union, entitled to defend their particular national interests and policies within the alliance.

Now the present Soviet leadership has shown that it will not tolerate this degree of domestic autonomy and of tactical independence in foreign policy in a situation where the domestic political methods of an "ally" become visibly more liberal than those practiced in the Soviet Union, or where divergences in diplomatic tactics affect the situation in Central Europe; and it has shown that it is prepared to resort to occupation rule or to the imposition of a new satellite regime, *despite the availability of non-satellite, popularly-based local Communists,* rather than put up with such a development. By this, the Kremlin has evidently set new limits to the autonomy not only of the Czechs and Slovaks, but also of those governments which joined in the occupation—whether they did so from conviction, as in the case of the Polish and East German regimes, or with reluctance, as in the case of the Hungarian Communist leaders.

Thus Soviet policy within the bloc, even while still seeking to avoid a return to Stalinist methods in detail, is in fact tending back to the Stalinist principle of conrol from a single center—but without the element of ideological inspiration that was still present in Stalin's imperialism. For while

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Stalin's subjugation of the East European countries to Russian power coincided with a Soviet-imposed change in their class structure and economic system, the present Moscow rulers' "defense of socialist achievements" has been revealed as a threadbare pretext—covering their exclusive concern with their own power—in a military intervention directed against a state securely governed by a Communist party. Such a reassertion of the Stalinist claim to Moscow's unique ideological authority, undertaken after more than a decade of pluralistic decay of that authority and without the ideological substance once attached to the claim, will naturally carry no conviction outside the sphere of direct Soviet power. But it means that reform will be stopped, and Soviet-style bureaucratic reaction consolidated, wherever Soviet troops are present; and even in the marginal case of Rumania, the choice will now be between open secession from the bloc, with its obviously severe risks, or a return to a much more cautious and limited use of autonomy than has been practiced in Bucharest in recent years. Nor is it likely that reform in the bloc through local Communist initiative will get another chance, unless and until the present reactionary phase is ended in the Soviet Union itself.

The Persistence of Bipolarity

For the future of world affairs, the fate of Czechoslovakia indicates that the era of "bipolarity"—of the central importance of the two superpowers and their relationship—is by no means at an end, but that the relationship has become more sharply asymmetrical than ever. The bipolar structure of world politics developed after World War II not only because two superpowers faced a comparative vacuum of power in Europe and Asia, but because one of them was ruled by men who believed that their security as a state was inextricably bound up with the extension of the area ruled by their type of regime—to wit, by Communist party dictatorship controlled from Moscow. It was this belief that created a peculiar new type of alliance—an "ideological bloc"—and that led, by its expansionist drive, to the formation of a counterbloc with at least some ideological coloring. In the course of two decades, the freezing of the bloc frontiers by the balance of nuclear terror, the filling of the former power vacuum by increasingly viable nation-states, and the decay of Communist ideological unity in the post-Stalin period have led to a noticeable decline of bloc cohesion on both sides; and as elements of cooperation between the two superpowers—motivated by mutual concern for survival and by common fears stemming from the rise of China—became visible during the latest period of East-West detente, a growing chorus of voices in the West began to announce not only a *change* in the character of the East-West conflict and a *limitation* of the role of bipolarity in the total picture, but the *end* of both.

In fact, Soviet-American cooperation has been largely confined to measures intended to limit the risks of continuing conflict, while tending to maintain the power differential between the superpowers and all other states, which is one of the structural bases of bipolarity. The detente has not been used for any serious attempt to tackle the unsolved issues underlying the conflict and, for reasons discussed above, has even enabled the Soviets, who entered it in a position of marked inferiority, to redress the balance to a considerable extent in their favor. At the same time, it is certainly true that the detente has greatly strengthened the disintegrative tendencies in both the Eastern and Western blocs. But it is in the reaction of the superpowers to these tendencies that the decisive asymmetry comes in—as the case of Czechoslovakia has shown.

For while the United States has neither the will nor the possibility to reimpose cohesion forcibly on its centrifugal European allies, the Soviet Union has just proved that it is both willing and, for the time being at least, able to do so. No doubt the Soviet leaders see the invasion of Czechoslovakia as a defensive measure on their part, intended merely to hold on to what they have—including, last but not least, their own positions at the top of a self-perpetuating hierarchy. In that sense, their diplomatic assurances that they have no intention of trespassing on what they recognize as a Western, and particularly American, sphere of influence may well be sincere. Yet the significant fact is that, independent of their immediate intentions, the reassertion of their control over Eastern Europe in the face of a remarkably divided Western Europe has become one more factor—along with the progress in their strategic armaments and their advances in the Middle East and Mediterranean—which tends to change the balance of world power, and of regional power in Europe, to their advantage. Experience teaches that no warlike adventure may be needed for the Soviet Union to exploit this kind of regional imbalance and the resulting sense of insecurity on the Western side for further political gain, unless concerted and timely measures for the correction of the imbalance and the restoration of a sense of security are taken on the Western side.

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Some Lessons

This is not to suggest that political weaknesses on the Western side can be cured by purely military measures. The need for political cooperation to assure the survival of a free and viable Europe, including the survival of its national variety, remains primary and has once more been impressively demonstrated by the tragic events in the heart of the continent. But it has also been demonstrated that the Soviet government, precisely because it remains a closed, dictatorial regime, enjoys a privilege denied to its Western opponents: the freedom to correct the results of political failure by brutal military action. It is of course true, as critics of Western policy have frequently pointed out, that the *need* to use armed force for political purposes in one's own power sphere is a *sign* of political failure—and this truth applies to both superpowers. But it is equally true that a regime that denies the right of opposition in principle, as the Soviets do, can retrieve a political failure by brute force far more easily than can a democratic regime. And it is finally true that while the West cannot ever replace constructive political achievement by military strength, it cannot replace the military strength needed for a balance of security by purely political or economic means either.

The Soviet occupation of Czechoslovakia is thus a grim reminder that we are still caught in the coils of a conflict which many of us had regarded as dead and buried—the Cold War. Certainly many of the early expectations of both sides have proved illusory in the course of two decades: the Soviets no longer expect their system to come to power in Western Europe within a politically foreseeable time, and have proved this once again by the unconcern they showed for the interests of the West European Communist parties during the Czechoslovak crisis; nor does any responsible statesman in the West now dream of the "liberation" of Eastern Europe by the pressure of Western military power or by anti-Communist uprisings. Certainly, too, the conflict is no longer viewed in apocalyptic terms: both sides have come to understand that there are ways in which they must cooperate for their common survival and thus limit the form of the conflict, even while it remains unresolved. Moreover, the West no longer regards Soviet communism as unchanging and unchangeable in its nature; on the contrary, it has come to believe that an opening-up of Soviet society and its emergence from the straitjacket of totalitarian one-party rule offer the best hope for an eventual resolution of the conflict—and that, to the limited extent that this long-term process can be influenced by the West, it will be best promoted by fostering all kinds of contacts between the Eastern and Western worlds rather than by helping the Soviet bureaucrats to isolate their country and their empire from the winds of change.

The invasion of Czechoslovakia and the subsequent proclamation by the Soviets of their "right" to intervene by arms in all "socialist" countries does not invalidate this long-term non-apocalyptic view of the East-West conflict, for—despite the shock produced by the Soviet course—it does not represent a return to reckless expansionism inspired by revolutionary faith. At the same time, it has shown in a flash how completely the detente of 1963 had come to mean simply the absence of an acute crisis confronting the two superpowers, and how ill-founded was the widespread Western belief that the mere continuation of the detente and of limited Soviet-American cooperation, with its disintegrating effects on both blocs, would suffice to bring about a gradual abatement of the conflict—despite the continuing rivalry of the two superpowers in the arms race and in several vital areas of the world. Instead, the recent events have confirmed the more skeptical view that the conflict, with all its waste and all its continuing risks, is likely to go on so long as the masters of the Soviet empire insist on ruling over closed dictatorial societies. It will go on not because the Soviet rulers remain ideological fanatics, nor because they believe the West would demand a change of their regime for ideological reasons, but because the distrust with which a despotic regime watches the peoples under its rule is inevitably projected onto the outside world, preventing a solution of major issues and a genuine agreement on that regime's place in the world community.

Finally, the fate of Czechoslovakia should make us reflect on whether the next major step forward toward a hopeful change in the East will have to come from imperial Russia itself rather than from the discouraged captive peoples of Eastern Europe. After all, the bureaucratic oligarchy that is now holding the Soviet Union in its grip has proved far less secure—and far less awesome to its subjects—than was Stalin's terrorist rule in its later years; hence we ought not to exclude the possibility that the long-suffering Russian people may yet come to play a more active part in ending the present reactionary phase of the Soviet regime than they were able to play in the original liquidation of Stalinism.

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Moscow and Its Allies

By François Fejto

The Soviet suppression of the Hungarian uprising in 1956 provided an object lesson on the real nature of the Warsaw Pact, and primarily on the principle (which to this day remains enshrined in its charter) of "mutual respect" for the sovereignty of its member states. It demonstrated that Moscow, following its own interpretation of the Warsaw Treaty, had no intention of respecting the right of its allied states to freedom and self-determination.

What happened in Czechoslovakia in the summer of 1968 has reconfirmed the spurious nature of Soviet assurances and guarantees to its "fraternal neighbors." The analogy between the events in Hungary and the CSSR is indeed striking, but there are two basic differences between these situations that should be pointed out.

First, the Soviet intervention in Hungary took place in the midst of an insurrection. The Hungarian Revolution, as it developed in the wake of the explosive events of October 23, took on an increasingly vigorous anti-Communist and anti-Soviet character. The stated goals of the insurgents were the overthrow of the one-party system and its replacement by a multi-party system in which the Communists would have figured only as a marginal —that is, representative—minority. The original demands were soon to be supplemented by those of neutrality and withdrawal from the Warsaw Pact.

In Czechoslovakia, there were no disorders and no insurrection. A new Communist government enjoyed broad popular support. To be sure, voices were raised in favor of broader democratization and the authorization of one or more opposition parties, and a few voices called for neutrality; but the majority of political leaders and ordinary citizens considered these demands inopportune and premature. Moreover, the government, the party leadership, and the National Assembly unceasingly stressed their willingness to abide scrupulously by the obligations flowing from the Warsaw Pact and the Comecon Charter. As proof of its loyalty, the Svoboda-Cernik Government even threw open the country's gates in June to Warsaw Pact forces whose ostensible purpose was to hold "routine" summer maneuvers. Even on August 21, the day of the invasion, the Prague government ordered the Czech-

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oslovak army (one of the best equipped and most disciplined in Eastern Europe) not to offer armed resistance to the allies.

The second difference lies in the fact that for its intervention in Hungary the Kremlin had a legal pretext—a rather trumped-up one, of course, but one which, given the prevailing state of international law, had a modicum of credibility. On October 23, it was the leadership of the Hungarian party, panicked by mounting popular demonstrations, that asked for the assistance of the Soviet command (though the circumstances of the appeal remain obscure). Imre Nagy, called upon to head the government during the night of October 23-24, endorsed the appeal; at the same time, he attempted to secure the promise of an early withdrawal of Soviet troops from the Hungarian capital. (They were stationed in the country under a bilateral agreement that was absolutely valid.) On November 4, while negotiations on the withdrawal of these troops were proceeding between Nagy's plenipotentiaries and the Soviet High Command, several members of the Hungarian leadership—Janos Kadar, Ferenc Münnich, and others—turned against Nagy. By forming a "revolutionary government of workers and peasants" and appealing to Moscow for assistance in subduing a "counterrevolution" (the Nagy government), they lent some legal—or legalistic—justification to the second Soviet intervention.

On August 21, 1968, the Soviets, obviously short on imagination, attempted to replay the Budapest scenario in Prague. But their attempt deteriorated into tragicomedy. They published an appeal for assistance signed by a "group of statesmen and leaders of the party, the government, and the Czechoslovak National Assembly." But the space for their names was left blank. The roles were there, but with no actors to play them. The handful of men relied on by the Soviets to behave like Czechoslovak Kadars had vanished into thin air. Alois Indra, chosen by the Russians to become head of the government, had a heart attack and had to be hospitalized in Moscow. On August 28, before the Slovak Party Congress, Gustav Husak stated that all the members of the Czechoslovak delegation to Moscow (which included six or seven figures widely suspected of collusion with the allied invaders) had given their word of honor that they had not signed the appeal for assistance invoked by the Kremlin.

Whereas in Hungary Kadar's "government" had appeared only a few hours after the first shots were fired by the army of intervention, in Prague Soviet Ambassador Chervonenko failed to set up a collaborationist government. The Soviets were forced not only to release Dubcek, Cernik, and the other lawful leaders arrested on the first day, but also to negotiate with them.[1] At the conclusion of these talks, the joint communiqué of August 27 said nothing more of the famous appeal for assistance, thus tacitly admitting that it was a fiction and that the August 21 statement of the Rumanian Central Committee, State Council, and government had been absolutely justified: it had described the Soviet action as a "violation of the national sovereignty of a free and independent fraternal state," a "violation of the principles on which relations between socialist countries are based and of the universally recognized norms of international law." [2]

In sum, therefore, the occupation of Czechoslovakia could not be justified on legal grounds unless one construed as "law" the decision announced by the Soviet Union and four of its allies, in their letter to Prague of July 15:

never to allow the historic achievements of socialism and the independence and freedom of our peoples to be endangered; . . . never to allow imperialism, whether peacefully or not, whether from within or from without, to open a breach in the socialist system and shift the balance of forces in Europe in its favor.[3]

This passage merits careful scrutiny. It contains the adumbration of a strange new doctrine whereby each great power or bloc of powers could arrogate to itself the right to intervene militarily in the affairs of an allied country to prevent what it considers to be a potential danger to its interests. It reveals the arbitrary nature—"imperialist nature," according to Peking [4]—of Soviet pressure on neighboring allies. In short, the Warsaw letter makes it clear beyond doubt that the Pact is not an alliance of sovereign and equal countries, and that part of its function is to keep its "sovereign" peoples under collective control. Thus, the armed takeover of Czechoslovakia was a sign of the Pact's essential weakness as a *partnership of states;* it was an admission that any real concessions to statehood or sovereignty might undermine the authority of its constituent *ruling elites.*

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[1] For the circumstances of these "negotiations," see *Le Monde* (Paris), Aug. 20, 1968.

[2] *Radio Bucharest,* Aug. 21, 1968. The principles governing relations between Communist countries have been defined in several declarations by the Soviet government or have been signed by representatives of the Soviet government; for excerpts from such documents, see the box on p. 31.

[3] *Le Monde,* July 19, 1968.

[4] Cf. the declaration issued by the *New China News Agency* on August 22: "It is an unprecedented revelation of the evil nature of the clique of renegade Soviet revisionists, who furiously apply the imperialist law of the stronger."

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Origins of the Pact

In order to understand the significance of the Czechoslovak drama as the most serious symptom thus far of the crisis of Soviet hegemony in Eastern Europe, it would be well to take a backward look. When, on May 14, 1955, the Soviet Union signed the treaty of friendship, cooperation, and mutual assistance, commonly called the Warsaw Pact, with representatives of the People's Republics of Europe, Moscow's primary aim was to make official a *de facto* situation, to give legal form to its control over the armed forces and territories of the East European countries. In effect, the Warsaw Pact—a multilateral arrangement—replaced the bilateral accords imposed by Stalin on his satellite states.[5] The structure of the Pact was modeled after that of NATO, the opposing force. Article 4 of the Warsaw Treaty provided for the mutual defense of signatory states, but unlike the corresponding provision in the Atlantic Treaty, this article contained no restrictive qualification that mutual military assistance would be contingent upon enemy attack.

The signatories of the Warsaw Pact undertook to "abstain from any threat or violence in their international relations," to consult over problems of common interest, and to sign no agreement contrary to the spirit of the Pact. The Treaty provided for the establishment of a unified command, of a consulta-

[5] Cf. V. Kotyk: "Some aspects of relations between Socialist countries," *Ceskoslovensky Casopis Historicky* (Prague), No. 4, 1967.

Pledges of the Past

The Warsaw Pact: May 1955

Article 1: The contracting parties undertake, in accordance with the United Nations Charter, to refrain in their international relations from violence or threats of violence, and to settle international disputes by peaceful means, so as not to threaten international peace and security.

Article 8: The contracting parties hereby declare that they will act in a spirit of friendship and cooperation for the purpose of developing and further strengthening the economic and cultural ties existing between them, abiding by the principles of mutual respect for their independence and sovereignty, and of non-interference in their internal affairs.

Article 9: This treaty shall be open to all states which, irrespective of their social and political system, declare themselves ready to contribute, by participating in this treaty, to the united effort of peaceful states to guarantee the peace and security of their people. . . .

Declaration of the Soviet Government: Oct. 30, 1956

Bound by the common ideal to build a socialist society and by the principles of proletarian internationalism, the countries of the great community of socialist nations can build relations only upon the principles of full equality of rights, respect for territorial integrity, political independence and sovereignty, and non-interference in one another's internal affairs. That does not rule out, but on the contrary presupposes, close fraternal cooperation and mutual assistance between the countries of the socialist community in the economic, political, and cultural fields. . . .

The 20th Party Congress of the CPSU . . . decided that the Soviet Union would resolutely base its relations with other socialist countries on the Leninist principles of the equality of rights of peoples. It proclaimed the necessity of taking into account the history and special characteristics of each country on the road to building a new life. . . .

In this connection, the Soviet Union starts from the principle that the question of stationing [abroad] the troops of any signatory state of the Warsaw Treaty must be settled with the agreement of all the signatory countries, and only with the consent of the state at whose request such troops are, or are to be, stationed in its territory.

Declaration of 81 Communist Parties: Nov. 1960

All the countries of the socialist camp are assured of absolutely equal rights and independence. Guided by the principles of complete equality, mutual advantage, and fraternal mutual assistance, the socialist states are strengthening economic, political, and cultural cooperation between them, as befits the interests of each socialist country and those of the socialist camp as a whole.

Declaration of Bloc Party Conference: Nov. 1967

The socialist countries base relations between them on the principles of complete equality, respect for territorial integrity, independence, political sovereignty, and reciprocal non-interference in internal affairs. These important principles are not, however, the only ones defining the nature of relations between socialist countries. Fraternal mutual assistance is an inseparable element in them. It is the effective expression of the principle of socialist internationalism.

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tive political committee, and of a few other auxiliary bodies with headquarters in Moscow. Supreme command was assigned to a Soviet general, assisted by a staff including representatives of the general staffs of the member states and their ministers of defense. The first commander-in-chief of Pact forces was Marshal Koniev, who was replaced in 1960 by Marshal Grechko. Then, after the latter was appointed to be Soviet Minister of Defense, Marshal Yakubovsky took command of the Pact armies.

From a strategic standpoint, the principal function of the Treaty was to consolidate and improve previous arrangements which had turned the whole region into a buffer zone against a possible Western invasion; it was to provide legal justification for the maintenance of Soviet troops in Central Europe. Only Czechoslovakia enjoyed the privilege of defending its Western border itself, owing to the trust that Stalin and his successors had placed in its unswervingly loyal leaders.

Slightly more than a year after its signing, the Pact underwent its first test as a result of the events in Poland and Hungary. The Hungarian attempt to withdraw from the camp and to seek a neutral status similar to that acquired by Austria in 1955 was thwarted by a Soviet intervention which was permissible under the terms of the Treaty and had the approval of the other signatory governments. At the same time, however, the Soviets—partly because of pressure from Peking, which at that time supported Gomulka—reached a compromise with the new Polish leadership (which had not sought refuge in neutrality). The Soviets acquiesced in Gomulka's demand that the Polish army be relieved of the all-too-obvious and unpopular tutelage of Soviet officers. Soviet Marshal Rokossovsky, the "Polish" Defense Minister, was "thanked" for his services and sent home to the USSR along with 32 other high-ranking officers of dual Soviet-Polish nationality. A Polish Marshal, Marian Spychalski, became Gomulka's new Minister of Defense. In fact, the whole Polish army underwent a process of repolonization; the Polish uniform, flag, and insignia were all restored.

But the Poles also made concessions to Moscow. On November 18, 1956, the Polish government—on the strength of promises made in a Soviet government declaration of October 30—signed an agreement defining the conditions under which Soviet troops could be stationed on Polish territory. The USSR subsequently concluded similar agreements with Hungary, East Germany, and Rumania. Later, in 1958, the Soviet Union withdrew its troops from Rumania in circumstances that remain to be clarified. It was to regret doing so as much as it was to regret leaving Czechoslovakia without Soviet garrisons. Until 1968, however, the Czechoslovak army, of all the armies allied to the USSR, was considered not only the best-equipped but also the most trustworthy.

Beginning in 1962, the edifice of the Warsaw Pact, which had been strengthened after the Hungarian and Polish incidents, suffered from the after-effects of a decline in Soviet prestige caused by a whole series of factors: the retreat in Cuba, the Moscow-Peking conflict, the relative passivity of the USSR in the face of the Vietnamese conflict, and the increasingly evident technological superiority of the United States.

The Rumanian Aberration

The Rumanians were the first to take advantage of the USSR's difficulties in the Far East and Latin America and of the East-West detente which appeared to be making rapid progress after the Cuban crisis. Bucharest expressed—first in the economic field and then in foreign affairs—a clear desire to disengage itself from the lockstep policies of the bloc. The Kremlin, on the other hand, aware of its flagging prestige and the ensuing growth of centrifugal forces within its sphere of influence, was at pains to reconsolidate the bloc, and especially the Warsaw Pact. In an address given on September 14, 1965, in the presence of his good friend Novotny, Brezhnev spoke the key word: "The Warsaw Pact must be *improved*."

It was obvious that what the Soviet party leader had in mind was better "coordination" of the foreign policy of the pact signatories in order to preclude diplomatic initiatives by the non-Soviet members. That was precisely why the Rumanians immediately put a spoke in Brezhnev's wheel. Taking care to justify all their claims by quotations from Marx, Engels, and Lenin, the Rumanians strongly insisted on their prerogatives as a sovereign state. A "Bucharest doctrine," proclaimed on May 7, 1966, by Rumanian Party Secretary-General Nicolae Ceaucescu, denounced the anachronism of military blocs and particularly military bases maintained abroad. Ceaucescu spoke in terms that patently had been inspired by the Pan-European position outlined by de Gaulle—a position warmly approved by the USSR because it seemed to conflict with American policy.

To Ceausescu, military blocs were "incompatible" with national independence and sovereignty and with normal relations between states. He there-

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fore suggested the *simultaneous dismantling* of the two major opposing blocs. Once again, Ceausescu, reviving the subtle traditions of Balkan diplomacy, took every precaution. For he could point out that the Warsaw Pact, which had been created as a direct and justifiable counterbalance to NATO, would have no reason to exist in the event that NATO ceased to exist. The Soviets did not openly refute this position, especially since the Rumanians had avoided advocating any unilateral dismantling of Pact forces. Bucharest, meanwhile, taking advantage of France's withdrawal from NATO, was framing its policy on the assumption that a disintegration of the blocs was already in progress. Furthermore, Ceaucescu pretended to believe that the Warsaw Pact was like any other bloc, and that the independence of its members was not a fiction.

In the spring of 1966, carefully and consistently advancing along that path, the Rumanians countered a Soviet plan to impose a permanent directorate on the Warsaw Pact by proposing an end to the maintenance of Soviet troops in third countries, periodic rotation in the supreme command of the bloc's military forces, and a sharing of nuclear responsibilities. Soon afterwards, Bucharest denied the existence of these counterproposals, but there is every indication that the stir they created in the Western press did not displease the Rumanian leadership. It would appear that Bucharest's primary objective did not consist in gaining acceptance for its own quite ambitious proposals, but in neutralizing Soviets attempts at tightening the Warsaw alliance. And in this the Rumanians succeeded—without, moreover, unduly provoking Moscow.

The Warsaw Pact Consultative Conference, held in Bucharest in July 1966, was a defeat for the more hawkish members of the alliance. It confirmed the *status quo*, that is, it took no new decisions toward strengthening the organization. It is true that the conference's proposals concerning collective security satisfied Ulbricht—the most militant of the East European leaders—by making recognition of the GDR and the immutability of its borders the keystone of Pact policy. But Ulbricht's other main objective—to obtain a formal pledge from his East European allies not to establish diplomatic relations with Bonn before the Federal Republic recognized the GDR—foundered on Ceausescu's stubborn resistance. The Rumanians insisted on proceeding with the normalization, already underway, of their relations with West Germany.

Thus the Rumanians, who three years previously had blocked economic integration within Comecon, had now blocked political integration within the Warsaw Pact. Henceforward, the camp's integration would be possible only without them or against them, and then perhaps only by means of an intervention which the Kremlin—deeply involved in its dispute with China and entangled in problems arising from the Vietnamese conflict—was loath to embark upon.

Rumania's national communism, combined as it was with her flirtation with Bonn, caused a hardening of the positions of Ulbricht, Gomulka, and Novotny, whose entire credo was founded on solidarity against "revanchist West Germany." It was Rumania's rebelliousness that aroused fears that the alliance was disintegrating, and with it the anti-West German barricade—fears which, after the rise in Czechoslovakia of a leadership less subservient to outside influence and less obsessed by the threat from Bonn, heightened in 1968 into a sense of panic and became one of the reasons (though not, in the author's opinion, the main one) for the Warsaw Pact powers' intervention in Czechoslovakia.

Bonn's New Ostpolitik

On January 31, 1967, the Rumanians—disregarding Soviet, East German, Polish, and Czechoslovak objections—established diplomatic relations with the new (October 1966) coalition government in Bonn, which had abandoned the Hallstein Doctrine [6] and was exploring the possibilities of rapprochement with a number of East European countries. Thus, a first breach was opened in the "insurmountable" barrier that the Soviet Union and its East European partners had wished to maintain against "the intrigues of the imperialist forces of aggression and revanchism." [7] Ulbricht immediately expressed regret that the Rumanians had *implicitly* acquiesced in the Bonn government's claim to be the sole legal representative of Germany.[8] The Bucharest press coldly dismissed this criticism, pointing out that Rumania, while continuing to recognize the GDR, could not insist upon Bonn's recognition of the existence of two Germanies as a precondition for the establishment of diplomatic relations. Furthermore, inasmuch as the normalization of relations between Bonn and Bucharest served the interest of peace, the

[6] For a description of the Hallstein Doctrine, see the article by Richard Lowenthal in this issue, p. 6.—Ed.

[7] Letter of the Five to the Czechoslovak Central Committee, Warsaw, July 15, 1968.

[8] *Neues Deutschland* (East Berlin), Feb. 3, 1967.

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Rumanians saw no point in pursuing an "all or nothing" policy toward West Germany.[9]

Out of powerlessness or deliberate calculation, Moscow again refrained from dramatizing the fact that the Rumanians had breached the solidarity of the Pact. Of course, the Kremlin had a few reasons for concern over this initial success for Bonn. Moscow was not unaware of the attraction exerted on the countries of Eastern Europe—even on Novotny's Czechoslovakia—by the financial, industrial, and technical capacity of the Federal Republic. Having broken with Adenauer's rigidity and the Hallstein Doctrine, Kiesinger and Brandt were in a position to use this capacity as political capital and to challenge Soviet influence in Eastern Europe.

Direct Soviet action against Rumania would have had serious drawbacks. For one, it certainly would have been disapproved in Paris, where West German attempts at rapprochement with Eastern Europe were being encouraged as a reinforcement of the Franco-Soviet effort to counterbalance American influence in Europe. Consequently, the USSR decided to apply indirect pressure on Bucharest by way of the East Germans and Poles, who perhaps more than anyone else were concerned over the possible ramifications of Rumania's indiscretions. Ulbricht in particular, anxious to maintain the economic momentum attained by his country since the erection of the Wall, became increasingly more defensive.[10] To his mind, West German infiltration into the Danube basin and the Balkans would inevitably lead to the isolation of the German Democratic Republic, to a lessening of its economic influence, and perhaps even to its absorption by the Federal Republic. Gomulka also considered the consolidation of the GDR an imperative of his foreign policy, the principal objectives of which were to prevent German reunification and reinforce the barricades against Bonn.

It was this united front of Poland and East Germany, supported by the seemingly more hesitant Soviet Union, that prevailed at the bloc conference of foreign ministers held in Warsaw on February 8-10, 1967 (in the absence of the Rumanian Foreign Minister, who had a "prior engagement" —an official visit to Denmark). At this meeting the Hungarians, Czechoslovaks, and Bulgarians, yielding to pressure from their northern allies, committed themselves to the "Ulbricht Doctrine": detente with the Federal Republic would be contingent upon Bonn's recognition of the GDR and of the inviolability of its borders, and upon West German renunciation of all nuclear weapons. Furthermore, the bloc countries decided—once again on the initiative of the Poles and East Germans—to replace the 20-year bilateral treaties concluded between 1946 and 1948 with new ones having an anti-West German orientation that was absent from Stalin's treaties. Poland and Czechoslovakia signed their new bilateral treaty on March 1, 1967. This was followed within a few months by treaties between Poland and East Germany, Czechoslovakia and East Germany, Poland and Bulgaria, Hungary and East Germany, and Bulgaria and East Germany. Similarly, all these countries signed new treaties with the Soviet Union modeled on earlier Soviet agreements with East Germany (1964) and Poland (1965).[11]

Only Rumania remained aloof from this movement, just as the Rumanian party was the only one in the Warsaw Pact not to be represented at the conference of East and West European CP's held at Karlovy Vary in April 1967, the purpose of which was to have *all* European Communist parties endorse the Ulbricht Doctrine.

But if the rapprochement between Bonn and the Communist countries was halted for a time as a result of this Polish-East German offensive, economic forces impelled even the most orthodox governments, such as Novotny's, to circumvent political obstacles. The agreement concluded between Prague and Bonn in August 1967 on the exchange of trade missions, and the gradual trend towards the resumption of diplomatic relations between Yugoslavia and West Germany, broken off ten years earlier, illustrated the power of the interests which, in view of the failures of Comecon and the imperative need to modernize the countries of Eastern Europe, induced the satellites to restore economic relations with Bonn.

The Middle East Crisis

The Middle East crisis in the summer of 1967 revealed once again the deterioration of discipline within the Communist bloc. From the very outset,

[9] *Scinteia*, Feb. 3, 1967.

[10] On Ulbricht's "neo-Prussianism," see the excellent article by E. Bettiza, "Les technocrates de Pankow," in *Preuves* (Paris), June-July 1968.

[11] In comparison with the treaty signed by the Soviet Union and the German Democratic Republic in 1964 (one of the last diplomatic instruments signed by Khrushchev), the treaties concluded by the GDR in 1967 with Poland and Czechoslovakia were characterized by a harsher, more aggressive tone.

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the Soviet government took up the cudgels for Nasser—the principal instrument in fulfilling Russia's centuries-old dream of gaining a foothold on the shores of the Mediterranean. The satellite governments, joined by Yugoslavia, immediately aligned themselves with the Kremlin in breaking diplomatic relations with Israel. Only Rumania preserved its freedom of action, adopting an attitude of neutrality which indisputably enhanced its international prestige and facilitated the election of a Rumanian (Corneliu Manescu) to the presidency of the United Nations General Assembly. It is obvious that Rumanian policy in this instance was dictated not by any particular feeling of good will towards Israel, but only *by the will to pursue a systematic policy exclusively guided by the national interest.*

Meanwhile, the Rumanian example began to impress public opinion in other countries of the bloc, particularly Czechoslovakia, where the government's 100-percent pro-Arab policy, abetted by a press campaign reminiscent of antisemitic campaigns in the Stalinist era, had caused considerable popular unrest. Rightly or wrongly, Czechoslovak public opinion tended to identify Israel, threatened with annihilation by an Arab world ten times superior in both men and military potential, with prewar Czechoslovakia threatened and invaded by Nazism.

The Middle East crisis brought to light the latent hostility of the intelligentsia towards a regime which was completely subservient to the Kremlin and which gave no consideration whatever to national opinion or interests. It is significant that the Czechoslovak Writers' Congress of June 1967, which unleashed the forces leading to Novotny's fall and the "political spring" of 1968, was dominated by two themes: protest against the anti-Israeli campaign and protest against censorship. From the outset, demands for a more "national" foreign policy and for the restoration of basic liberties were closely linked in the minds of many Czechoslovak citizens, Communists and non-Communists alike.

Reasons and Pretexts

On January 5, Alexander Dubcek assumed the post of Party First Secretary, pledging himself to policies more libertarian, less subservient to foreign interests, and hence vastly more popular than those of his predecessor. It was true that Czechoslovakia's democratic reawakening, both encouraged and restrained by Dubcek, contained a national, not to say nationalist, element. But on the basis of my three-month stay in Czechoslovakia in this year of 1968, during which I had many conversations with men in the party and government, as well as with the most diverse representatives of public opinion, I can state categorically that not even the most "extremist" and "radical" supporters of destalinization and democratization ever dreamed of breaking with the alliance, of restoring a bourgeois system, or of defecting to the Western camp. Everyone seemed absolutely convinced that Czechoslovakia' place—as Svoboda was to repeat, his voice choked by emotion, on his return from Moscow on August 27—was in

On Alliance and Autonomy

Not only in this article, but in many others I have written since January 1968, I have emphasized the necessity of our orientation in foreign policy toward the USSR and the socialist states. Even today I change nothing in my views, regardless of the momentary attitude of the leadership of a number of Communist and Workers' Parties to our development. I am convinced that the CPCS leadership, and every Czechoslovak government respecting the country's interests and needs, will make no substantial change in this orientation, and that no conspiracy of the imperialist powers will deflect them from this path. Czechoslovakia's national interests do not permit it.

However, it does not follow that Czechoslovakia will abandon its own path to socialism because of the disapproval of some of its socialist allies. We are convinced that this way of our own is in no conflict with our foreign political orientation. Such a conflict could arise only if some socialist countries should try to exploit Czechoslovakia's vital interests in the alliance and the present tension between the CSSR and the socialist countries as a means to put pressure on Czechoslovakia. Only in this case could such a conflict arise. The CSSR's foreign political orientation is therefore absolutely dependent on our socialist allies. The leadership of the CPCS does everything to strengthen it. This, and nothing else, is the meaning of my article.

—From an article by Vaclav Kotyk, in *Prace* (Prague), July 23, 1968.

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the Communist camp. It hardly seems possible that the Soviets could have been mistaken about that.

It is therefore clear that the reason given by the USSR and its four allies for the intervention—namely, that the developments in Czechoslovakia had posed a threat to the security of the bloc—was only a pretext, or in any case not the decisive reason. "The frontiers of the socialist world," they wrote in their ultimatum of July 15, "have reached to the center of Europe as far as the Elbe and the Riesengebirge, and we shall never allow these historic conquests of socialism, or the independence and security of all our peoples, to be threatened." Although this description of the advance of Soviet influence to the Elbe as a historic conquest of *socialism* is highly questionable, there is nothing to suggest that the development of socialist democracy in Czechoslovakia, as put into effect under the "Action Program" of the Czechoslovak Communist Party in April, endangered the independence and security of the Warsaw Pact countries. For once, the conclusions drawn by Western observers coincided with those of Peking, Belgrade, and Tirana: the leaders of the five invading countries confused their personal and group interests, their partisan interests—I would almost say *factional* interests—with those of their respective states. Brezhnev, Ulbricht, Gomulka, Kadar, and Zhivkov, with their outdated methods, their visceral fear of freedom, felt provoked, threatened, and about to be swept into the "dustbin of history" (as *Pravda* wrote of Dubcek) by the wind of freedom that was blowing from the Vltava.

On the eve of the events in Czechoslovakia, given the growing waywardness of Rumania and Yugoslavia, the Warsaw Pact stood at the crossroads: it could take the road leading to a transformation of the Pact into an alliance between equals, with a view to the gradual reunification of Europe, first economic, and then political; or it could take the road to ideological conformity within the Pact, of its reconversion into a "Holy Alliance" of bureaucratic and despotic Communist regimes opposed to meaningful détente with the West. It was upon this second road that they chose to set out at the end of August 1968, accomplishing the "noble mission" (according to Zhukov in *Pravda*) of nipping in the bud the most promising Communist experiment since the war—an experiment distinguished by competence and creativity and one that could have become a source of positive inspiration to the entire Communist movement.

Ulbricht, Eminence Grise

In conclusion, a few words about the special role and influence of Walter Ulbricht, dictator of East Germany, the last survivor of the "great generation" of the Third International, and perhaps the most cynical of all the leaders of the Communist world.

From the outset, it was the East Germans who spearheaded the press campaign against Czechoslovak revisionism. Their press reflected an intolerance and aggressiveness in comparison with which even the Moscow *Pravda* and *Izvestia* appeared amiably indulgent. In May of this year, at a time when Moscow was still reluctant to precipitate matters, still hoping to induce Dubcek to become a Czechoslovak facsimile of the Kadar prototype, Ulbricht's associates were already calling for military intervention. A memorandum that circulated among the top leaders of the East German party described the situation in Czechoslovakia as catastrophic:

The counterrevolution is on the verge of winning. . . . A return to the prewar bourgeois regime is being proposed, in principle, by the Action Program of the Czechoslovak Communist Party, which is implicitly directed against the foundations of socialism. . . . The assurances of friendship towards the USSR and its socialist allies . . . are worthless since those who offer them are no longer guiding the development of their own country and no longer hold any power. . . . Class enemies and imperialist agents are infiltrating Czechoslovak territory without difficulty. . . . Things have reached the point where the situation has ceased to be an internal problem of Czechoslovakia. . . . The Czechoslovak government is thus violating its treaty obligations, and is guilty of treason against its allies. The socialist countries cannot remain indifferent in the face of this situation. The provisions of the Warsaw Pact make possible an intervention which would be in keeping with the interests of the socialist countries and accordingly could not be described as interference. However, in the event of an intervention, which might include military intervention, collective measures will have to be taken. . . .

A summary of this secret memorandum reached Czechoslovakia, and *Literarni listy* published it on May 30, 1968. It contains, nearly six months before the event, all the arguments that the Soviet press would later use to justify the intervention (see, *e.g.*, the long article in *Pravda* on August 22, 1968). There is every reason to suppose then, that the most active instigators of the military operation, and the most brutally untruthful provocateurs, were in East Berlin. This was not fortuitous. The consolidation and strengthening of the German Democratic Republic as the northwestern bastion of Soviet power seems to have accentuated the tendency of the present Soviet leaders to behave

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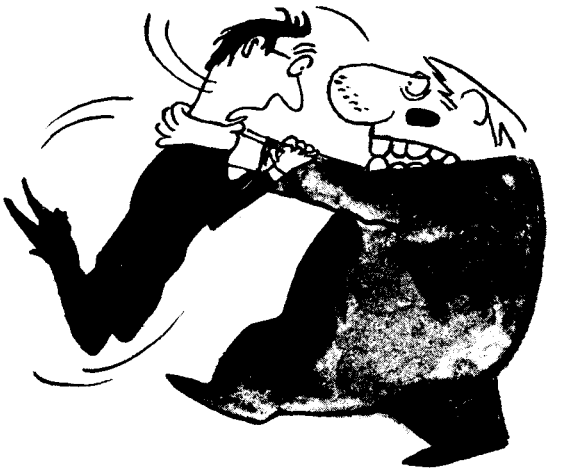
not only as the heirs of Stalin's neo-Tsarism, but also as successors to the Third Reich's hegemony over Eastern Europe. Ironically enough, it is to East Germany that the Soviets are turning for special assistance in maintaining imperial control over former satellites of the Reich; meanwhile, of course, Soviet propaganda relentlessly accuses *Bonn* of imperialist and revanchist tendencies and points to the "rise of neo-Nazism" in the Federal Republic.

The facts are indisputable: the USSR, in crushing Czechoslovak socialist democracy and humiliating its leaders, employed methods that reminded all Czechoslovaks of the methods used by Hitler in 1938 and 1939. Did they not attempt to make a new Hacha out of President Svoboda? [12] Was it not with the Munich Agreement and its consequences in mind that young Czechoslovaks painted swastikas on the Soviet tanks that rolled to a stop in their streets? Still other elements of Soviet policy in 1968 offer striking resemblances to the policy of the Reich: attempts to drive a wedge between Czechs and Slovaks; the threat to dismember the country by the establishment of an "independent Slovakia" and a Czech "protectorate"; appeals to fifth columns; the deployment of Hungarians and Poles to occupy a country against which they harbor old resentments; threats of a lasting military occupation; and finally, antisemitic demagoguery, thinly veiled by the term "anti-Zionist," which had already proved so effective in Poland. One might carry the search for analogies even further and view the repeated pressure exerted on Rumania and Yugoslavia as reminiscent of the Reich's pressure on the Balkans. By the same token, Moscow has adopted the familiar tactic of playing on the anti-Rumanian sentiments of the Hungarians (over Transylvania) and the anti-Yugoslav sentiments of the Bulgarians (over Macedonia).

Ulbricht's German Democratic Republic appears to be the means whereby a curious historical fusion has come about between the two imperialisms of the past—pan-Slavic and Germanic—which so violently clashed during World War II. The fact that the first victims of that fusion were the Czechs and Slovaks, who for so long thought themselves the privileged Slavic brothers and protégés of the USSR, reflects not only the worsening of internal contradictions within the Soviet Empire, but also the leading role assumed by militaristic, technocratic, and fascist forces within this despotism.



Vladimír Hlavín

. „Kdo je u tebe antisemita, ty kluku židovská!"

"Whom are you calling an antisemite, you Jew-bastard!"

—From *Dikobraz* (Prague), July 23, 1968.

[12] On March 15, 1939, President Emil Hacha put his name to a declaration placing "the destiny of the Czech people and country with confidence in the hands of the Führer of the German Reich." Slovakia became an "independent state."

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Reform and Reaction

By Kenneth Ames

It has become accepted usage among Czechoslovaks to refer to the far-reaching political changes that were taking place in their country in the months immediately preceding the invasion of August 21 as "the post-January policy." The liberalizing, or progressive, forces which championed and attained that brief glimpse of relative freedom were, however, already in evidence before January 1968.

The first stirrings of unrest came to light in the economic and cultural fields. In June 1967, a congress of the Czechoslovak Writers' Union resounded with voices protesting against continued political stagnation under President and Party First Secretary Antonin Novotny. Among the more strident voices were those of writer and candidate member of the party Central Committee Jan Prochazka and the writers Ludvik Vaculik, Milan Kundera, Pavel Kohout and Ivan Klima, all of whom attacked the existing system in general, and Novotny and Jiri Hendrych—the party's chief ideologist—in particular.[1]

The Arab-Israeli War in June 1967 had considerable impact on the country's growing *malaise*, principally because of the total discrepancy between the mood of the people and an official government policy that sought to foment an anti-Israeli and (*sub rosa*) antisemitic campaign. At the Writers' Congress, Pavel Kohout spoke with some irony of "a small country I know, surrounded by enemies. You think I am speaking of Israel. No, I am speaking of Czechoslovakia at the time of Munich in 1938." Among the vanguard of the Writers' Union, Vaculik, Klima, and Antonim Liehm were expelled from the party,[2] and Prochazka lost his candidacy for the Central Committee. The Union's influential journal, *Literarni noviny*, was taken over by the Ministry of Culture, and its subsequent articles and editorials became known as the "Tales of Hoffmann," after the Minister of Culture, Karel Hoffmann.

By October-November 1967, the unrest had spread to thousands of students at Charles University in Prague, the oldest university in Central

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[1] For example, Vaculik observed that while all ruling classes tended to degenerate, undemocratic governments were particularly susceptible to corruption. Kohout, in turn, protested the regime's pro-Arab policy, asked how many times the Writer's Union had denounced acts of censorship, and even read out one of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's letters of protest to the Soviet Writers' Union.

[2] Under the Dubcek regime these writers were reinstated in the party, and Liehm was named editor of *Literarni listi;* see further in text.

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Europe, and at Prague Polytechnic. On October 31, the students staged a demonstration directed specifically against repeated breakdowns in utilities, including nightly electrical failures, which prevented them from studying in their hostels. But the demonstration also expressed the students' general frustration at the inefficient and bureaucratic state machinery. As the students marched in protest, the police intervened, pursuing the demonstrators back to their quarters and injuring a number of them. Official comment was at first noncommittal but was followed by an agreement to investigate student complaints and later, on December 4, by an unparalleled admission that the police had indeed resorted to excessive violence. As a further concession, the authorities dismissed several officials responsible for the maintenance of student hostels.

Meanwhile, a group of highly qualified economists, under the guidance of the imaginative Dr. Ota Sik, had been struggling to put through comprehensive reforms aimed at reinvigorating a demonstrably failing economy. Sik's reform proposals, after being considerably watered down by Novotny and the conservative leadership, had gone into effect at the beginning of 1967, but these half-hearted measures produced very little in the way of immediate, tangible results as reflected in the national standard of living.

Sik had won over Oldrich Cernik, chairman of the Planning Committee, and had also worked hard on Novotny, almost persuading him that the nation's future depended on a complete remodeling of the economy. But by late autumn of 1967, it was abundantly clear that there could be no real economic progress without radical changes on the political front.

The Fall of Novotny

Dissension had also been brewing for a number of years within the ranks of the party itself over a wide range of issues such as economic reform, censorship, intraparty democracy, relations between Czechs and Slovaks, and the country's orientation toward both East and West. It finally came to a head in October 1967. At a Central Committee plenum on October 31, Alexander Dubcek, 46-year-old First Secretary of the (by no means independent) Slovak CP, openly accused Novotny of "behaving like a dictator" and attempting to sabotage the economic reform program.

Nominally, the plenum had been called to debate "the Communist Party's role in a socialist society," but it soon developed into an open clash with Novotny, who was then both President and party First Secretary. Novotny found himself under fire from both flanks: from the conservative wing for making too many concessions; and from the progressives, led by Dubcek, for his mishandling of the economy and matters affecting the Slovak half of the nation.

Dubcek, as Slovak leader, charged Novotny with deliberately and incompetently meddling in Slovak affairs to the detriment of the region's economy. Novotny angrily replied that Slovakia, if it hoped to reach the more sophisticated level of Bohemia-Moravia, was heavily dependent on the Czech lands for development aid. He suggested that if Dubcek did not approve of the way matters were being handled, the two economies could be separated, in which case Slovakia would no longer get Czech assistance.

Then Dubcek threw the bomb which was to change the political future: "Before we can talk of economic division, we must discuss political division, starting at the top with the party leadership." An open row ensued, with Novotny turning on Dubcek to denounce him as a "bourgeois nationalist," a term once freely and destructively applied to Slovak Communists during the Stalinist era.

During the last two months of 1967, the split deepened between the supporters of Novotny and the "new progressives" led by Dubcek, Oldrich Cernik, Jaromir Dolansky, Drahomir Kolder and Jiri Hendrych, all members of the ten-man party Presidium. (Hendrych, hitherto a staunch supporter of Novotny, had performed an astounding *volte face* to join, if only briefly, the pro-Dubcek ranks.) Novotny, backed by conservatives (or fence-straddlers) like Michal Chudik, Otokar Simunek, Bohuslav Lastovicka, and Jozef Lenart, stood four-square against any suggestion of political reform.

It was at this point that the Soviet ambassador in Prague, N. Stepan Chervonenko, moved onto the scene, intervening in a bid to maintain Novotny as both President and party chief. At Novotny's request, supported by Chervonenko, the Soviet Party First Secretary, Leonid Brezhnev, made a flying visit to Prague on December 8 to bolster the Czechoslovak leader's faltering position within the party. Brezhnev, however, soon found that he could accomplish very little with the progressives, who were in no mood to be dictated to from the outside, and he left the country, announcing to the Czechoslovaks: "Comrades, this is your prob-

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lem." [3] Before his return to Moscow, he stopped off briefly at Bratislava, presumably to get another look at Alexander Dubcek, the leader of the progressive movement. Dubcek, with an impeccable background as a sound Communist, including thirteen years spent in the Soviet Union and three years of training at the Soviet Higher Political School, apparently impressed Brezhnev, who returned hopeful that Dubcek might serve as an acceptable alternative to Novotny.

By this time the Czechoslovak party Presidium found itself equally divided between those who supported Novotny and those who did not. Unable to resolve its differences, the Presidium resorted to a stratagem without precedent in the annals of Communism: it took the conflict to the full 110-man Central Committee for an open debate, without offering any recommendations. After some delay, a plenary session of the Central Committee was convened on December 19, its members clearly bewildered by the novel experience of being able to speak freely, without dictation from the Presidium. The Central Committee remained in session almost continuously (taking only a brief recess for Christmas), as a majority of the members expressed a desire to be heard. With the usual time limit on speeches lifted, some of the speakers went on at great length.

As the debate neared a climax in early January, Novotny played one of his last cards. With the help of his Defense Minister, General Bohumir Lomsky, and Generals Rytir and Sejna, he made a bid to enlist the intervention of the army on his behalf. But news of this plan was leaked before a pro-Novotny coup could be attempted. (After Novotny's downfall, the new Dubcek regime removed Lomsky from office on April 3 and replaced Rytir on April 19, but Sejna had already taken the precaution of defecting as early as February 25. Lomsky's deputy, Colonel General Vladimir Janko, committed suicide on March 14.)

The denouement of the Central Committee debate came at a three-day session (January 3-5), which definitely set Czechoslovakia's future course in the direction of liberalization. The essence of this momentous decision has been succinctly described in an official publication entitled *The Road to Democratic Socialism:* [4]

For years, there were forces within the Communist Party that openly pointed to the fact that a mistaken policy was leading to economic stagnation and drawing the state more and more into a blind alley. These forces were eventually able to make themselves felt at the December 1967 and January 1968 sessions of the Central Committee, where, for the first time on a broad scale, sharp criticism of the existing state of affairs was voiced. The essence of the discussion was . . . that it was absolutely imperative that the centralist model of managing society should be abolished, that administrative and undemocratic interference in all spheres of social and cultural life be eliminated because they hampered creative thinking and the development of all facets of the human personality. . . . [The Central Committee] judged that a system of a wholly uncontrollable concentration of power in the hands of one person had developed within the past few years.

Faced by such a consensus in the Central Committee, as well as by enormous pressure from the public at large, Novotny at last found himself compelled to resign as party First Secretary, though retaining his post as President in keeping with the Central Committee's decision "to separate the functions of the President of the Republic and the First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist party." [5] (In interesting contrast to this decision, the Rumanian Communist Party, at a national conference held December 6-8, 1967, did precisely the opposite in permitting its First Secretary, Nicolae Ceausescu, to enlarge his stature by concurrently becoming Chairman of the State Council, the equivalent of President.)

There was some jockeying over the selection of Novotny's successor as party leader. Novotny himself proposed Jozef Lenart, then Prime Minister, while his opponents preferred Oldrich Cernik, who had been an effective head of the State Planning Commission. But neither Lenart nor Cernik was able to muster a clear majority of votes in the Central Committee, and a stalemate loomed until someone—generally believed to have been Cernik himself—proposed the name of Alexander Dubcek. On January 5, Dubcek received a unanimous vote from both the Presidium and the full Central Committee as Novotny's replacement, thus becoming, at 46, the youngest leader of a ruling Communist party, with the exception of Fidel Castro. At the same time, the Central Committee plenum expanded the party secretariat to include Jan Piller, the Deputy Minister of Heavy Industry; Josef Spacek, an energetic liberal from the South Moravian party district; Emil Rigo, a party leader from Kosice (and the only Gypsy in a leading position); and

[3] *Radio Prague*, March 18, 1968, quoting from disclosures made by Josef Smrkovsky, soon to become chairman of the National Assembly, before a mass meeting of students in Prague.

[4] Pragopress, Prague.

[5] *CETEKA*, Jan. 5, 1968.

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Josef Boruvka—all of them known progressives.

This was the beginning of a slow but steady process of replacing hardline Novotny supporters with men characterized by a more imaginative approach to the problems facing the country—for the most part men of Dubcek's generation and even younger. This process continued right up to the August invasion.

Dubcek at the Helm

Curiously enough, one of the first foreign Communist leaders to send a telegram of congratulations to Dubcek on his election as head of the Czechoslovak Communist Party (CPCS) was Leonid Brezhnev. The Soviet leadership had apparently concluded, at least at that stage, that Dubcek (the first Slovak to lead the CPCS) was a suitable successor to Novotny.

During his first weeks in office, Dubcek gave Moscow and its Warsaw Pact allies no great cause for concern. From the very beginning, he preached moderation and insisted on moving gradually and carefully towards the sort of democratic socialism the Czechoslovaks had been dreaming of for several years—a society with freedom of expression and freedom from unwarranted arrest; a society affording greater satisfaction of consumer needs and freedom to travel abroad without restriction. Dubcek, in fact, regarded himself as a good "Centrist," neither a conservative of the old school nor a radical reformist. Indeed, his frequent insistence on moderation [6] during the early months of 1968 led many citizens to wonder whether a genuine change was in the offing.

Despite Dubcek's caution, however, Novotny's demotion at the January plenum served to unleash powerful pressures for reform in all spheres of life. There was a general upsurge of demands—not only from intellectuals and students, but also from workers' councils and local party cadres—for more rapid democratization and for action against those responsible for crimes committed during the Stalinist period. Prague, and to a lesser extent the rest of Czechoslovakia, were pervaded by an atmosphere of euphoria. Proclamations and manifestos swearing allegiance to Dubcek and his new team came pouring in from factories, government offices, and collective farms. Dubcek clubs were formed, and photographs of that now-familiar, smooth face, with its enigmatic smile, appeared in increasing numbers.

But Dubcek's departure from the leadership of the Slovak party left a gap which had to be filled. On January 23, Vasil Bilak was elected to replace Dubcek as Slovak party chief and also to serve on the presidium of the National Assembly. Later events proved this to have been an unfortunate choice, for Bilak was among the small coterie of Czechoslovak party leaders whom the Russians were eyeing even then as possible members of a collaborationist regime.

While these changes were taking place, the Czechoslovak Union of Writers announced that it would found a new weekly, *Literarni listy* to replace the one (*Literarni noviny*) which Novotny had wrested from its control. Before long, *Literarni*

Jaroslav Pop

„Paní Müllerová, vy nám dosvědčíte, že jsme byli vždycky progresivní."

"Mrs. Müllerova, you'll testify, won't you, that we've all been progressives!"

—From *Dikobraz* (Prague), June 20, 1968.

[6] For example, on March 16, 1968, *Rude pravo* quoted Dubcek as follows: "I have asked the editors not to accelerate the rate at which new problems are put forward. Society must have enough time to absorb the new situation and weigh the pros and cons of the various issues." On April 2, the same newspaper quoted him as saying: "While consistently pursuing the cause of socialist democracy, we must ignore extremes harmful to future development. Everybody should clearly understand that we are concerned not just with democracy, but with socialist democracy."

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listy was to become a particular *bête noire* in the eyes of the five members of the Warsaw Pact who, within a few weeks, were to begin planning an invasion of Czechoslovakia.

By January 29, Alexander Dubcek was on his way to Moscow for the first of a series of confrontations with the Kremlin leaders. This first, two-day meeting has the distinction of being the last which could remotely be described as cordial. A communiqué spoke of "warm friendship, sincerity, and complete identity of views on all matters discussed."[7] Subsequent statements tended to rely more on the euphemistic phrase "frank and comradely exchanges," which indicated the degree of coolness that had come to pervade the relations between the two countries.

During the first week of February, there were hasty meetings, first with a Hungarian and then with a Polish party delegation, to discuss the forthcoming consultative meeting of Communist parties in Budapest.[8] These were followed, on March 6 and 7, by a full-scale meeting of all Warsaw Pact leaders in Sofia. Moscow's most trusted allies (the Rumanians, though present, could hardly be described as "most trusted") were anxious to assure themselves of Dubcek's reliability.

Meanwhile, for nearly three months after losing control of the party, Novotny remained as figurehead President of the Republic and a silent, ineffective member of the Central Committee. Public pressure against him continued to mount, however, and on March 22 he addressed a letter to the National Assembly—just emerging from a prolonged state of impotence—asking to be relieved from office as head of state. In his letter of resignation, published in *Rude pravo* on March 23, Novotny claimed that he had reached his decision voluntarily, and he pointed out that it was the Central Committee of the CPCS which had originally proposed him for office. In the annals of Communist history, the manner in which he was permitted to step down was unusually civilized, without threat of trial or retribution from those he had oppressed for 15 years.

On March 30, General Ludvik Svoboda, a white-haired ex-soldier who had won the highest Soviet military decoration when fighting with the Red Army during World War II, was chosen by the National Assembly, in a near-unanimous vote of 282 out of 289, to succeed Novotny as President. Many of the 300 deputies were visibly bewildered by their first experience of a genuinely secret ballot. Novotny, sitting alone, as if in quarantine, was on hand to see Svoboda sworn in; it was the last occasion on which the longtime party leader appeared in public.

The weeding-out of Novotny's followers from key posts was already proceeding rapidly. On March 15, Minister of the Interior Josef Kudrna and State Prosecutor Jan Bartuska, both ardent Novotny adherents, were removed from their posts. As noted earlier, Major General Jan Sejna, who had been instrumental in trying to organize a military putsch in support of Novotny, had fled the country on February 25, proceeding via Hungary, Yugoslavia, and Italy to the United States. Since Sejna had had access to military secrets, his defection caused some basic alterations in Warsaw Pact Treaty plans and troop dispositions.[9]

The Paths of Reform

Important changes also took place in the fields of press, radio, and television. On February 26, 380 members of the Union of Czechoslovak Journalists —like the Union of Writers a force to be reckoned with—declared themselves dissatisfied with their secretary general, Adolf Hradecky, and dissociated themselves from his attacks on those who had spoken up at the Writers' Congress in June 1967. Faced by this declaration of no-confidence, Hradecky announced on March 22 that he was relinquishing his post, and no successor was named. At the same time, four other members of his presidium bowed out "owing to pressure of work," placing the Union of Journalists firmly in the control of the liberals.

This development produced quick repercussions. Ivan Skala, conservative director of the "Mlada

[7] *Rude pravo*, Jan. 31, 1968.

[8] The meeting with the Hungarians took place on February 4; with the Poles, on February 7. The Budapest conference was held from February 26 through March 5.

[9] In an interview with *The New York Times* of August 26, 1968, Sejna claimed that he had fled the country after vainly attempting to warn Dubcek of Soviet efforts to drive a wedge between the Czechoslovak army and the new regime. Sejna charged that certain generals, posing as liberals, were in fact conspiring with the Soviet Union, but had managed to convince Dubcek that innocent officers—such as Sejna himself—had backed an abortive coup. He said that Defense Minister Martin Dzur and Lieutenant General Jan Prchlik—both credited with forestalling a military takeover—were two of the real conspirators and were intending to replace the new First Secretary with Drahomir Kolder, an inveterate conservative in good standing with the Soviet Union.

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Fronta" publishing house (producing youth dailies and periodicals), asked to be relieved of his post and was succeeded by a liberal, Karel Cervinka. Other editors in provincial towns, aware of the winds of change, also resigned and were replaced by progressives. The press now stepped up its demands for greater freedom, and on June 26 (just seven weeks before the invasion) the National Assembly passed a law formally abolishing the censorship. This paved the way for what was surely the most significant editorial change of all: Oldrich Svestka, a notorious hardliner, was removed as chief editor of *Rude pravo*, the party's principal organ. Just prior to his dismissal,[10] Svestka had dropped two of his most liberal deputy editors, Emil Sip and Zdislav Sulc, and then found himself with an editorial board which refused to cooperate. Jiri Pelikan, a Dubcek supporter in the Central Committee and a known liberal, remained in charge of the State Television Services; his opposite number as controller of national radio was Zdenek Hejzlar, a man of similar ideological persuasion.

One of the first questions which commanded the attention of the newly-liberated press was the persistent mystery surrounding the death of former Foreign Minister Jan Masaryk on March 10, 1948. The official version had always been that Masaryk committed suicide by throwing himself from a window of the Czernin Palace, which housed—then as now—the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. But there was plenty of evidence to suggest that Masaryk might well have been either forcibly driven to suicide or actually killed and then thrown from the window. The newspaper *Student* was the first to demand reinvestigation, suggesting that the Soviet KGB had been directly involved in the death of Masaryk. The cry was taken up by sections of the press and television, enraging Moscow and drawing a categoric denial from the Soviet official news agency, *TASS*.[11]

Meanwhile, reforms went ahead in other areas. The judiciary was reorganized, new constitutional and electoral laws were being drafted, as were detailed plans for federalization.[12] Commissions were also established to examine claims for compensation by former political prisoners and other victims of persecution.

Late March brought the first signs of outside pressure designed to curb the liberalizing forces in Czechoslovakia. On March 21, extensive Soviet troop movements were observed on Czechoslovakia's eastern frontier with the Soviet Union, and on March 23, a "summit conference" of Warsaw Pact party leaders, excluding Rumania, was held in Dresden. Dubcek, who had already outlined and defended his proposed Action Program (of which more later) to a perplexed gathering in Sofia, was once more cross-examined at Dresden: How far did he intend to go? Would collective security be compromised? Thus, the Dresden meeting, ostensibly held to form a solid front against "West German revanchism," turned into an inquisition of Dubcek, largely inspired by his archenemy, Walter Ulbricht. The Dresden communiqué, issued after a delay of two days, emphasized "the fraternal friendship of the parties and peoples of the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia," adding that "the Dresden conference strengthened relations between socialist countries on a basis of cordial friendship, equality, mutual trust, mutual support, and non-interference in the affairs of other states." [13]

The first public salvo against the new order in Prague was fired shortly afterward by the ideological chief of the East German SED, Professor Kurt Hager. Addressing a Congress of Philosophers in East Berlin, Hager said:

In their campaign against our socialist constitution, West German propaganda centers refer . . . to the events in Czechoslovakia. They diligently quote statements by Forestry Minister Smrkovsky; they produce in great detail the attacks of journalists and writers against the Central Committee and the leading role of the party. They openly express their sympathy with these statements and phenomena in the CSSR. . . . The behavior of Smrkovsky and others fills them [the West Germans] with hope that the CSSR might be engulfed in the turmoil of evolution. . . .[14]

Hager's hostile appraisal of internal developments in Czechoslovakia was a clear breach of both the

[10] Although the official date of Svestka's removal was Aug. 31, his *de facto* dismissal took place before the invasion.

[11] May 7, 1968.

[12] On October 27, 1968, the federalization of Czechoslovakia became fact. The National Assembly voted unanimously to create a federative state of two nations—one comprising the Czech peoples of Bohemia and Moravia, the other the Slovaks—which is to begin functioning on January 1, 1969. The law reserves responsibility for education and culture to the Czech and Slovak regional administrations, and responsibility for foreign policy and defense to the federal government. Responsibilities for many aspects of the economy remain as yet undefined, but will be shared by both federal and regional institutions. The parliament will be bicameral, with one chamber to be elected by the entire nation, the other to have an equal representation of Czechs and Slovaks; and the two chambers will be equal in status. The National Assembly also passed a law according linguistic and cultural rights to the Hungarian, German, Polish, and Ruthenian ethnic minorities in Czechoslovakia.

[13] *Pravda*, March 28, 1968.

[14] *Neues Deutschland* (East Berlin), March 27, 1968.

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spirit and the letter of the Warsaw Pact, which stipulates mutual non-interference by its signatories in each other's internal affairs. Accordingly, on the same day that Hager's remarks appeared in print (March 27), Czechoslovak Foreign Minister Vaclav David called in East German Ambassador Peter Florin and handed him a formal protest, while the Czechoslovak Ambassador in East Berlin simultaneously protested in person to East German Foreign Minister Otto Winzer and Erich Honecker, Secretary of the SED Central Committee.

Notwithstanding these signs of hostility on the part of some of Czechoslovakia's Warsaw Pact partners, Dubcek and his associates continued to

On the Anti-Czechoslovak Campaign

. . . . How did our friends in certain socialist countries react to events which offered our two nations, so often humiliated in history, the last chance of living a dignified life in a free and prosperous republic? At first, silence reigned. The citizens of some nations were not given an opportunity to learn about our process of democratization —they are probably still unaware of the shocking crimes committed by the Czechoslovak Stalinist judiciary and police, about which we now have information, thanks to the testimony of witnesses and victims. They are probably still unaware of the shock felt by hundreds of thousands of people when they realized that, under the banner of socialism, crimes had been committed and that Nazi methods were used in this country.

These and other events are unknown to the citizens of some friendly states because their communications media think, as we once did, that it is their duty to "educate" the people, that is, to lead them by the hand instead of giving them objective information. In some of these states this silence has now been broken, and barrel organs have begun to play. After the clumsy and typically Prussian arrogance of Professor [Kurt] Hager [the chief East German ideologist and Politburo member, who criticized political developments in Czechoslovakia at the international Communist philosophical congress held in East Berlin in March], other sounds have followed. They are gradually developing into something that a Czechoslovak unhampered by diplomatic considerations would call an anti-Czechoslovak campaign. . . .

What is behind the hard ideological core of the misgivings and attacks of our critics in the USSR, East Germany, Poland and Bulgaria? (I use the term "ideological" intentionally because everyone familiar with politics, whether in theory or in practice, knows full well that ideology is nothing more than a cloak enveloping the concrete political and economic power interests of one country or another.) It is the prospect of weakening, or even smothering, socialism in the Czechoslovak republic.

"Antisocialist aims" are cited. The hoary old chestnut "revisionism" is pulled out of the bag once more, and democracy, which is a thorn in the side of all dogmatists, is angrily described as "specious." The thesis that the "*ideological struggle is aggravated*" is pushed with an alacrity not usually found in the industrial production of these states. There are the clichés, typical of an undemocratic and unscientific way of thinking: "a sector of the anti-imperialist struggle," "to hold the offensive," "the counterattack of the reactionaries," and "individual revolutionary detachments." Nationalism is condemned as a danger to the international Communist movement. An evil, tangled web is being woven. . . .

It is really quite natural for people, after 20 years of disappointment, to make critical remarks or seem skeptical about socialism in general. It is admirable that the majority, perhaps only out of intellectual conviction, continues to regard socialism as the basis of life for our society. However, this majority does not want just any kind of socialism. It wants a socialism that does not divide citizens into the haves, with power and privilege, and the have-nots, the socialist negroes or pariahs. It wants a socialism that provides adequate supplies of goods, security, order and liberty; a socialism where production, trade and services function smoothly and where democracy is effective—that is, a political system whereby the people determine in free and secret elections who will represent them and which party deserves their confidence, a socialism that guarantees a system allowing freedom to speak, write and assemble. . . .

Up to this point, there has been no socialism of this kind in our country, or anywhere in the world for that matter. But this is what we want and I do not have the slightest doubt that the people in the countries from which these critical voices come want it too. On the other hand, I have no doubt that those who have become accustomed to a privileged status do not want this kind of socialism.

As for nationalism, if criticism about its dangers is directed at us, it is comic. Have we declared that we are better than the others and that we want to play a leading role? Have we occupied any foreign territory? What do we want? We merely want to be masters in our own house. . . .

We who regard the January plenum of the party as a step toward a more humane, democratic and decent existence must continue along this road, because retreat is impossible. And we have the right to ask that the citizens of friendly states ought at least be given an opportunity to hear about our development and to be informed about the *raison d'etre* of our effort. . . .

One thing is clear beyond any doubt: if the normal principles of Marxian morality and legality also apply to relations between states, it is not the Czechs and Slovaks who violate these laws. On the contrary, we uphold them without always having to define the word "socialism." We want socialism for the people, and not people for socialism.

—Excerpted from an article by sociologist Miroslav Jodl, in* Literarni noviny *(Prague), May 16, 1968.

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consolidate their position. At another Central Committee plenum which met from March 29 to April 5, they succeeded in pushing through further changes in the Central Committee secretariat and Presidium, even though an estimated one-third of the Central Committee was still committed to Novotny's support. To begin with, Hendrych and Vladimir Koucky were dropped as Central Committee secretaries (the latter was appointed ambassador to Moscow—a strange choice considering that he was a notorious Novotny man long accustomed to complying with Soviet policy.) In the same reshuffle, Novotny, Chudik, Hendrych, Lastovicka and Dolansky were removed from the Presidium, and Hendrych was also removed from his post as ideological chief, to be replaced first by Josef Spacek and later by Cestmir Cisar. The reconstituted Presidium consisted of Frantisek Barbirek, Vasil Bilak, Oldrich Cernik, Alexander Dubcek, Drahomir Kolder, Frantisek Kriegel, Jan Piller, Emil Rigo, Josef Smrkovsky, Josef Spacek, and Oldrich Svestka. Newly-elected Central Committee secretaries were Alois Indra, Zdenek Mlynar, Cestmir Cisar, Vaclav Slavnik, and Oldrich Volejnik. On the face of it, the new top-level line-up appeared to be one that could be relied on to support the new course. Within a few months, however, it emerged that Bilak, Kolder, Indra, and Svestka were on the side of Soviet power—and Moscow's likely candidates for a Quisling government.

On April 9, a new government was also installed. Josef Lenart, who had the disadvantage of being a Slovak (it was regarded as unwise to have too many Slovaks in top positions under a Slovak party chief) and who also had earned a reputation as a fence-sitter, was removed from the premiership and replaced by Cernik. The new premier was backed by three more reformers as deputies: Dr. Ota Sik, Frantisek Hamouz, and Gustav Husak (shortly to replace Bilak as head of the Slovak party). Josef Smrkovsky, until then the little-known Minister of Water and Forests, was made chairman of the National Assembly, and Frantisek Kriegel—disliked by the Soviets because of his Jewish origin and later referred to by Brezhnev as "that Zionist agent"—was made chairman of the National Front.[15]

[15] According to an article in the *Herald Tribune* (Paris) of August 29, a Czechoslovak source in Berlin attributed the same sort of remark to Kosygin. At Cierna, the source said, the Soviet Premier objected to the presence of Kriegel, a "Galician Jew," at such high-level bilateral consultations. During the forced detention of Dubcek *et al.* after the invasion, Kriegel was beaten mercilessly by his "hosts."

Besides the top-level changes in party and government personnel, other decisions taken by the March-April plenum underlined the break with the Novotny past. A 12-man commission was set up to deal with the rehabilitation of victims of the political trials of 1949-54, and officials who had been involved in the political persecutions of that period were barred from fulfilling any important functions. The plenum also voted to rescind the expulsion from party membership of three maverick writers —Ivan Klima, Antonin Liehm, and Ludvik Vaculik —and the disciplinary measures taken against two others—Pavel Kohout and Milan Kundera.[16]

Action and Reaction

Even more important was the plenum's adoption, on April 5, of the "Action Program," which was to be the sheet anchor of the Dubcek regime's policy up to the August invasion. This document affirmed the new leadership's determination to forge a democratic socialist society in Czechoslovakia in these circumspect yet unmistakable terms:

We are not changing our fundamental orientation. In the spirit of our traditions and former decisions, we want to develop to the utmost in this country an advanced socialist society rid of class antagonisms, [a society] economically, technically and culturally highly advanced . . . offering the opportunity for dignified human life, comradely relations of mutual cooperation among people, and free scope for the development of the human personality. . . .

We want to start building a new, intensely democratic model of a socialist society which will fully correspond to Czechoslovak conditions. But our own experiences and Marxist scientific experiences lead us to the conclusion that these aims cannot be achieved along the old paths, using means which have long been obsolete, and harsh methods which are always dragging us back—our society has entered a difficult period during which we can no longer rely on traditional schemes.[17]

Throughout the text of the Action Program, however, there was repeated emphasis on Czechoslovakia's continued adherence to the Warsaw Treaty and Comecon, and on a "basic orientation of policy . . . in alliance and cooperation with the Soviet Union and other socialist states." Indeed, at no time during the brief months of liberalization was there ever the slightest suggestion that the Czechoslovak leaders intended to renege on their commitments within the Communist bloc. Never-

[16] *Rude pravo*, April 2.

[17] *Documents on Today's CSSR*, Prague, Svoboda Publishing House, July 1968.

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theless, the bitter antagonism of Moscow and its supporters steadily increased.

As Dubcek himself later pointed out, the Soviets manifested growing "anxiety lest the process of democratization would be abused in our country to the detriment of socialism" [18] and the Warsaw Treaty Organization. Accordingly, following the adoption of the Action Program, outside pressure mounted sharply. In late April,[19] Marshal Ivan Yakubovsky, Commander-in-Chief of the Warsaw Pact forces, was in Prague pressing renewed demands for the stationing of Warsaw Pact (primarily Soviet) troops in Czechoslovakia—demands which even Novotny had resisted successfully for three years.[20] Then, as a compromise, Yakubovsky suggested holding extensive joint military exercises on Czechoslovak territory during the summer. At this point, Dubcek, accompanied by Cernik, Smrkovsky, and Bilak, went to Moscow in an attempt to fend off Soviet political demands. Intent upon preserving the Action Program, Dubcek apparently found it both necessary and expedient to capitulate on the question of "joint command staff exercises."

On May 17, hard on the heels of Marshal Yakubovsky's appearance in Prague, Soviet Premier Aleksei Kosygin came to Czechoslovakia, ostensibly to take the cure at Karlovy Vary, but in fact to take another sounding of Prague's new leaders. Kosygin slipped in unannounced and unnoticed while attention focused on the arrival the same day of a strong Soviet military delegation led by Defense Minister Marshal Andrei Grechko. Included in the delegation was General Yepishev, who had caused a considerable stir only two weeks earlier by announcing, in an unpublished speech, that the Soviet Army would march into Czechoslovakia if its assistance was required by any group within Czechoslovakia. Not surprisingly, he denied ever having made such a statement, although contingency planning for the occupation was by then well advanced.

At this stage, a latent conservatism still persisted in some of the outlying regions of Czechoslovakia, notably in the industrial districts of southern and western Bohemia and northern Moravia. In order to combat it, the party leadership embarked on a campaign to explain its new policies, including the Action Program, at regional and district party levels. Further conferences were held at which new regional party secretaries were elected. At the grass roots, a broad consensus favored holding the 14th Party Congress as early as possible for the purpose of electing a new Central Committee and voting out those 34 or so remaining conservatives who had already been stripped of major responsibilities, but who still represented a potential center of renewed opposition in the Central Committee.

Novotny was already known to be soliciting whatever support he could muster, comforted no doubt by the knowledge that Soviet troops were already massing on the frontier. A sudden rash of leaflets (printed in East Germany) mysteriously appeared in Prague,[21] containing indications that Novotny's supporters were counting on a return to power. Soviet Ambassador Chervonenko was meanwhile reported holding repeated meetings with disaffected elements, prompting Dubcek to summon him and convey a warning against further interference in Czechoslovak internal political affairs. Significantly enough, Chervonenko had expanded his already large embassy, recruiting more Czech-speaking translators and interpreters and establishing an efficient monitoring service of everything put out by the Czechoslovak radio, television, and press. This information was being immediately communicated to Moscow.

The Grand Deception

At another Central Committee plenum held from May 29 to June 1, a two-thirds majority finally voted to "suspend" Novotny from party membership and fixed September 9 as the date for convening an Extraordinary Party Congress. Early convocation of the congress was essential for Dubcek, who—though having the support of a clear majority in the new Presidium—still needed to achieve a more secure power base within the Central Committee (to be newly elected by the Con-

[18] Interview with *Rude pravo*, May 7, 1968.

[19] On April 24, *CETEKA* announced that the Soviet Marshal had called on President Svoboda for a "friendly talk."

[20] According to the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* (Zürich, Switz.) of Sept. 8, 1968, Novotny, in a secret agreement with the Soviet Union several years ago, reserved the "right" to call in Warsaw Pact troops in the event of internal or external threat to the country, but made it clear he would not accede to uninvited intervention. Novotny is also said to have reminded the Soviet leaders of the terms of this agreement whenever they pressed for permission to garrison troops in the CSSR.

[21] These leaflets attacked Dubcek as "anti-socialist," accusing him of "attempting to prise Czechoslovakia from the socialist camp, the Warsaw Treaty Organization, and Comecon" and of "pandering to Western imperialism." Although most of the leaflets were smuggled in from East Germany, Prague television claimed on June 16 that the Soviet Embassy had set up its own printing press by early spring.

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gress). By the same token it now became equally obvious that the Soviets and their allies would have to act hastily in order to forestall the Congress.

The degree to which the Czechoslovak leaders were deliberately misled by their Warsaw Pact allies can be gauged from a statement by Defense Minister Colonel Martin Dzur, reported by the *CETEKA* news agency on May 4. While confirming that there had been talks with Yakubovsky about staging joint military exercises by Warsaw Treaty forces on Czechoslovak territory, Dzur emphasized that these "staff exercises" were not to be "comparable in magnitude to the Vltava maneuvers of 1966." Thus, the impression long persisted that the war games would be merely in the nature of a staff tactical exercise with a few signal units and observers.

Although the "staff exercises" were not due to begin until June 20, Soviet, East German, Polish, and Hungarian troops were already positioning themselves in considerable strength inside the country by the first days of June. At the same time, the Soviet press mounted a campaign of invective against certain individuals in the Czechoslovak party leadership, especially singling out Dr. Cestmir Cisar, then party ideological chief, for his temerity in suggesting that the Soviet interpretation of Marxism-Leninism was not the only possible interpretation. The Soviets produced one of their more trusted and aged philosophers, F. Konstantinov, to take Cisar to task, insisting that there could only be one "road to socialism." [22]

June came and went, and with it the promised date for the withdrawal of the "staff exercise" troops. The Warsaw Pact command—for all practical purposes the Soviet Army command—produced a variety of specious reasons for delaying their departure: the troops were exhausted and needed to rest up; mechanical repairs had to be carried out; the bridges were not safe enough to take the weight of Soviet armor (though strong enough to permit its entry); and, to be sure, the generals did not wish to complicate Czechoslovak highway traffic.

This bald attempt to pressure Czechoslovakia into abandoning its liberal course drew an unprecedently sharp response from the country's intellectuals. On June 27, *Literarni listy* published a "Two-Thousand Words" manifesto, written by Ludvik Vaculik and signed by over 70 persons, including writers, professors, and scientists, which not only defended the reforms thus far effected but urged further and faster liberalization and warned against foreign attempts to thwart it. While observing that the past twenty years of Czechoslovak history had been marred by inept and self-seeking political leadership, the manifesto was, in most respects, moderate in its proposals toward rectifying the situation. To begin with, it in no way challenged the primacy of the Communist Party and indeed emphasized that the path to a brighter future was being forged by Communists bold enough to admit their party's past mistakes. Furthermore, while exhorting the population at large to press the new regime for a more rapid redress of grievances, the manifesto stressed that "we must reject methods which are illegitimate, indecent, or gross, since they might prejudice Alexander Dubcek." As for members of the Old Guard who were still in public office, the manifesto sought no retribution beyond

[22] *Pravda*, June 14, 1968: "Marxism is the Only International Teaching." On June 22 Cisar replied in *Rude pravo*, and on July 24 Konstantinov kept the debate running with another long article in *Pravda*.

"Socialism Has Prevailed"

I would like to underline that in our discussions during the past few months—whose freedom could well be an object of envy for many a country proud of its democratic spirit—there were no serious doubts about two basic pillars of our social existence, namely about the socialist character of our society and about our system of alliances. I believe that through this free discussion, which represents the freest popular vote, we have proved to ourselves and to the whole world, more clearly than we could have done through the most solemn declarations, that in the minds of our people socialism has prevailed as the road of evolution of our state and nation and that our system of alliances has prevailed as the guarantee for the independence of our state. We have also proved that our society is ripe for a much greater degree of liberty than had been allowed to it in the past few years. I cannot imagine that this proof could be regarded as insufficient by people of good will, and, for this reason, I must suspect ulterior motives wherever this evidence is ignored.

—From an article by Prof. Eduard Goldstuecker, in *Literarni listy* (Prague), May 16, 1968.

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their dismissal and even suggested "collecting funds for their retirement."

Still, Vaculik and his co-signatories were bent on accelerating the pace of the liberalization process, and they went so far as to mention the possibility of "strikes and boycotts" as a means of achieving their ends. They went even farther in regard to foreign pressures. Taking note of the danger that "foreign forces may interfere with our internal development," the manifesto gave assurances of complete support for the Dubcek regime, "if necessary, even with arms." This was too much for Dubcek, who felt obliged to dissociate himself from the document.

On July 10 Lieutenant General Vaclav Prchlik, Chief of the Army Political Department, pointed out over national television that he saw no sign of a withdrawal of foreign troops. On the same day, an angry telephone conversation took place between Dubcek and Brezhnev (eyewitnesses say that Dubcek pounded the table while addressing the Soviet leader in fluent Russian). Two days later came the announcement that the withdrawal would begin. Then Prchlik, in another television interview on July 15, drew even greater attention to himself by advocating a radical restructuring of the Warsaw Treaty command so as to accord greater authority to its non-Soviet elements. On July 25, Prchlik was relieved of his post in an obvious effort to appease the Kremlin.[23]

Towards Invasion

The situation was now deteriorating rapidly. The Czechoslovak leaders had already declined an "invitation" to attend an investigation into their activities held by their "allies" in Warsaw on July 15 and 16. On July 18, they received from these allies a letter of almost unparalleled offensiveness:

The development of events in your country deeply disquiets us. The rise of reaction against your party and the bases of the social system in Czechoslovakia, supported by imperialism, threatens to lead your country away from the path of socialism and as a consequence is a danger to the interests of the whole socialist system. . . . Anti-socialist and revisionist forces are besmirching all the activities of the Communist Party, are leading a campaign against the party's cadres, and are discrediting honest Communists who are devoted to the party. . . . A situation has arisen which is absolutely unacceptable for a socialist country.

On the same day, the CPCS Presidium replied at considerable length to these accusations, which had also included a charge of pandering to "revanchist" West Germany. "It is known," the Presidium letter declared, "that the CSSR, although it is an immediate neighbor of the German Federal Republic, was the last to take certain steps towards a partial regulation of mutual relations, particularly in the economic field, whereas other socialist countries adjusted their relations with the GFR to varying degrees without causing any fears." This was, among other things, a dig at East Germany, which lists the GFR (West Germany) as one of its major trading partners. The letter added: "We think that the common cause of socialism is not advanced by holding conferences at which the policy and activity of a fraternal party are judged in the absence of its representatives." [24]

The Presidium was immediately inundated by letters and petitions expressing popular support for its stand against the Warsaw conferees. Encouraged by this support, Dubcek flatly announced over television on July 18 that Czechoslovakia was unwilling "to give up any of the principles we expressed in the Action Program and which we have repeated in the stand taken by the Presidium." Thus the Soviets and their allies, by their crude attempts at intimidation, had only succeeded in uniting the Czechoslovak nation firmly behind Dubcek, a process which might otherwise have taken several years.

The pace of events quickened. A demand by Brezhnev that the full Czechoslovak and Soviet leaderships should meet for bilateral talks in Moscow, Kiev, or Lvov was rejected by the Czechoslovak Presidium, which felt that it would be imprudent to leave the country at that time. The Soviets, still insisting on a full-dress conference of the entire Politburo and CPCS Presidium, then agreed to come to Czechoslovakia, and a meeting was scheduled to begin on July 29 at Cierna-nad-Tisou, just two miles from the Soviet frontier. The Soviet Union, under the guise of military

[23] According to *The New York Times* of July 28, 1968, Prchlik's dismissal may have been merely dressed in the trappings of "appeasement." For one thing, the new regime had—of its own accord—already intended to eliminate Prchlik's bureau from the party organizational structure. Furthermore, it was rumored that Prchlik was immediately transferred to a command along the Slovak border with the Soviet Union. If this was indeed the case, the general and his troops were in a position to keep a watchful eye on the bilateral proceedings at Cierna.

[24] *CETEKA*, July 18, 1968.

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maneuvers in its western territories, was already mobilizing for the invasion, and there was no longer any doubt in the minds of Dubcek and the Presidium of the threat under which they would be "negotiating."

Meanwhile, the Czechoslovak party at lower levels was busily preparing for the September 9 party Congress, electing more than 1,500 delegates and nominating over 900 candidates to compete for seats on a new Central Committee. Without doubt, the Congress—had it taken place—would have marked an important step toward eliminating the last vestiges of Stalinist conservatism. There was also striking evidence of popular solidarity. On July 26, *Literarni listy*, the spearhead of the intellectual movement, rushed out a circular (authored by Pavel Kohout) assuring the Presidium of the nation's undivided support and at the same time demanding courage from their leaders. "To miss this unique opportunity," it declared, "would be our misfortune and your shame. We trust in you." In almost every town and village, booths were set up so that citizens could put their signatures to this declaration of confidence. Several million signatures were collected within a few days.

The deliberations at Cierna (July 29-31) and a few days later at Bratislava (August 3), are now recorded history. At Cierna, the Russians demanded the removal of several hundred men in key positions, particularly in the mass media, made it abundantly clear that old conservatives must be reinstated, exacted assurances that Prague would make no further overtures to West Germany that might unsettle Ulbricht's already uneasy position, and insisted on a resumption of Czechoslovak arms deliveries to the Arab world. At Bratislava, the Soviet Union's "allies"—Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland and East Germany—were called in to ratify the protocol. The communiqué,[25] issued after the latter meeting, was couched in classic Stalinist phraseology. But the die had already been cast. The last-minute appearances in Prague of Yugoslavia's Marshal Tito (August 9) and of Rumania's President and party leader, Nicolae Ceausescu (August 15)—though intended to lend moral support—only served to aggravate Dubcek's position with Moscow.

In the early hours of August 21, little more than two weeks after Dubcek insisted that the Bratislava meeting had won time for his nation, Soviet airborne divisions were flown into Prague's Ruzyne airport, and Soviet armored columns thundered into the center of the capital.

Prague's eight months of political spring had come to an end.

[25] *TASS*, Aug. 3, 1968.

Ende Gut, Alles Gut . . .

At the suggestion of the Presidium of the GDR Council of Ministers, Chairman of the GDR Council of State Walter Ulbricht decorated a number of generals and officers of the National People's Army with high state awards. For outstanding merit during the aid operation of the socialist states for the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic, Major General Erich Peter received the Patriotic Order of Merit in silver. Major General Werner Winter and Colonels Erich Dirwelis, Gerhard Lorenz, and Klaus-Dieter Baumgarten received the Patriotic Order of Merit in bronze. Other officers were honored with the "Fighting Order for Merit for the People and the Fatherland." Minister of National Defense Heinz Hoffman presented the orders and documents to the decorated persons.

—*Neues Deutschland* (East Berlin), Nov. 15, 1968.

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An Economic Model in Eclipse

By Harry G. Shaffer

One apparent consequence of the five Warsaw Pact powers' armed intervention in Czechoslovakia has been to cast a pall of uncertainty over the whole future of economic liberalization in Communist Eastern Europe. A clear augury of this was the fact that one of the first members of the Dubcek government to be forced out of office in the wake of the occupation was Dr. Ota Sik, for more than ten years a leading proponent of economic reform, principal architect of Czechoslovakia's "New Economic Model," and Deputy Premier under Dubcek since the political "changes" of last January. Vacationing in Yugoslavia at the time of the Soviet intervention, Dr. Sik chose not to return home and, on September 4, 1968, resigned his government post. He has since taken up residence in Switzerland.

Since the intervention, Dr. Sik's ideas on substituting an economically more rational and probably more efficient "market socialism" for the rigidly centralized economic system of the past have been under concerted attack in the press of all of the occupying Warsaw Pact countries except Hungary.[1] It would therefore appear that, to all intents and purposes, the "Sik model" has been put in cold storage—at least for the time being.

Nevertheless, Dr. Sik's economic theories, as set forth in his 1967 book, *Plan and Market Under Socialism*,[2] continue to be of more than academic interest. For while more advanced and more outspoken in their rejection of Stalinist principles, they are—paradoxically—not essentially out of line with the cautious economic experimentation currently going on in other Soviet-bloc countries, including the Soviet Union itself. Conceivably, therefore, they could yet become the basis of a new economic order

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[1] *E.g.*, see *Pravda*, Sept. 2, 1968, and *Izvestia*, Sept. 2 and 3, 1968; also *Neues Deutschland* (East Berlin), Aug. 25, 1968; *Trybuna Ludu* (Warsaw), Sept. 2, 1968; and Bulgarian News Agency (BTA) report, Aug. 25, 1968.

[2] Prague, Academic Publishing House of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences, 1967. (Sole distributor outside the Communist countries: International Arts and Sciences Press, New York.)

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in Czechoslovakia, and possibly in other East European bloc countries as well. Moreover, an analysis of Sik's ideas will enable the reader to evaluate the validity of Soviet, Polish, East German, and Bulgarian charges that the architects of Czechoslovakia's New Economic Model were bent on leading the country down the road of "counterrevolution" and a "return to capitalism."

Plan and Market Under Socialism is a thoroughly revised, expanded, and updated version of Dr. Sik's earlier work, *K problematice socialistickych zboznich vztahu* (On Problems of Socialist Commodity Relations), published in 1964. The latter book was, in turn, a sequel to his still earlier (1958) *Ekonomika, zajmy, politika* (Economics, Interests, Politics), in which—as he notes in his latest work (p. 14)[3]—he had "attempted to disclose the most fundamental methodological errors and incorrect theoretical roots of the Stalinist market concept under socialism." He notes further that in 1958 his views still bore traces of "dogmatic sediment" and were "decidedly affected by the political atmosphere" then prevailing (p. 15). His latest book, on the contrary, shows little evidence of politically-imposed restraint, at least in its criticism of past and present planning methods in socialist countries and its advocacy of the extensive use of free-market relationships.

As the title implies, Sik addresses himself to the functions of, and relationships between, the overall plan and the market mechanism under conditions of socialism. On every specific topic of discussion —be it the relationship between material and moral incentives, the coordination of individual and collective interests, the criteria for investment decisions, price formation, or the functions of money— he critically examines the economic theories and practices that prevailed until recently in all the socialist countries (but of course with special reference to Czechoslovakia) and then proceeds to set forth his own alternatives.

An Outworn Model

For many years Czechoslovakia's economy, operating under a system of detailed economic planning from the center, managed to achieve considerable progress by emphasizing *extensive* growth: *i.e.*, increasing output by means of higher inputs of labor, machinery, etc., rather than by enhancing economic efficiency. But by the 1960's the opportunities for continued extensive economic growth had begun to diminish, owing in particular to a growing shortage of labor, and the country's economic situation started to deteriorate rapidly. Dropping rates of economic growth finally culminated in 1963 in actual declines of industrial output, national income, and real wages.[4] Sik sums up the major failings that characterized past policy as follows:

One may say, in general, that the extensive development of the economy in Czechoslovakia in the past years was characterized by relatively high material inputs, ineffective use of plant and machinery, a disproportionate growth in investment costs, a slowing down in the productivity of labor, a more marked decline in the growth of national income than in [that of] global product, and a growing share of net investment in the national income (p. 74).

Nor does Sik hesitate to put his finger on the root of Czechoslovakia's deteriorating economic situation:

It is impossible to understand the long-term negative effect of the extensive development of our production if we do not think of it as the inevitable result of the old directive system of management and the suppression of socialist market relationships (p. 83).

And, even more outspokenly:

The centralized administrative system of planned management in the spirit of Stalinist theories has really brought the economy to a situation where further development is no longer possible unless a clearcut stop is put to this erroneous system of management (p. 46).

Sik's case against administrative planning from the center is presented in great detail and is illustrated by numerous examples throughout the book. Although he acknowledges that Czechoslovakia for a time achieved rapid economic growth with such a system, he attempts to demonstrate that centralized administrative planning has nowhere and at no time approached optimum economic performance, and that it never can. Without extensive use of the market, he argues, central planners will never be able to make socialist economies truly efficient because they necessarily suffer from a lack of the knowledge, information, and hence the ability to make correctly the many millions of detailed economic decisions that are required. The impossibility of effectively planning all details at the center,

[3] Parenthetical page references throughout this article are to Sik's *Plan and Market Under Socialism*.

[4] *Hospodarske noviny* (Prague), No. 9, 1964, p. 3; see also *Statisticka rocenka CSSR*, Prague, 1964, p. 41.

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the argument continues, becomes ever more pronounced as a socialist economy matures, the number of decisions to be made multiplies, and the opportunities for extensive development diminish.

Sik's New Economic Model, which in essence envisages the reestablishment of relatively free market relations within the framework of an economy planned only in its major proportions by the center, is more than just a revision of the previous system of economic planning and management; it is a fundamental reform. The "Action Program" adopted by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia on April 5, 1968, officially reiterating the conclusions of the 13th Party Congress of June 1966 regarding the introduction of the New Economic Model in Czechoslovakia, stated in unmistakable terms:

The improvement of our economy and the transition to intensive economic development cannot be achieved by traditional approaches or by partial improvements in the directive system of management and planning, but only by a basic change in the socialist economic mechanism . . . an economic reform based on a new economic system, revival of the positive functions of the socialist market, necessary structural changes in the economy, and a profound change in the role of the economic plan, which would cease to be an instrument for issuing orders and would instead become an instrument enabling society to determine the most suitable long-range lines of development by scientific methods. . .[5]

A Market Socialism

Emphasis, then, is on the reestablishment of market conditions, which Sik considers absolutely essential for an economy wishing to attain optimum utilization of economic resources. "We can flatly state," he writes, "that no move towards more scientific planning methods would help—or would actually be scientific—if market relations are not used to solve conflicts of interest and to create a genuine interest in optimum development of production" (p. 364). Accordingly, Sik's model incorporates many of the features of a market economy that are familiar to Western capitalist and semi-capitalist societies and introduces many approaches contrary to those that prevailed during the era of command planning in Czechoslovakia. Notably it envisages:

1) The extensive utilization of material incentives ("A society which provides only a sort of superstructural, political, moral, etc., stimulus for performing socially necessary labor, . . . while the direct, immediate economic incentives are lacking . . . must perish sooner or later"—p. 162);

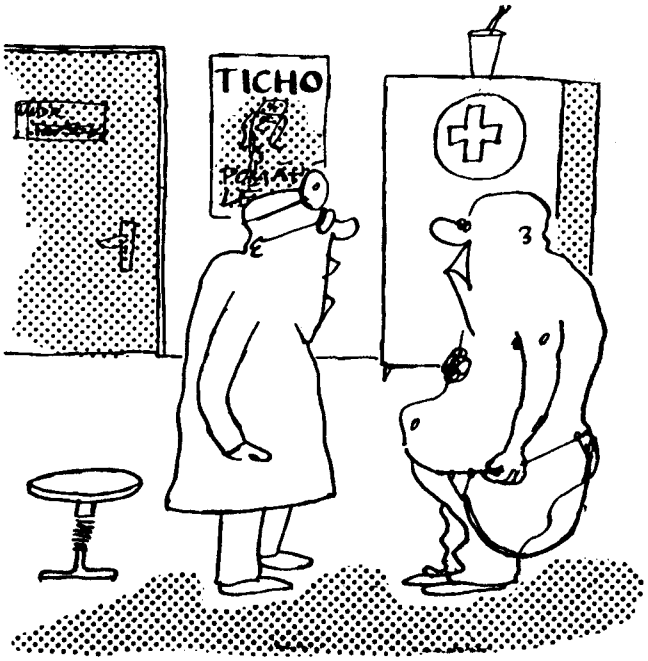
2) The relatively free formation of wholesale as well as retail prices (Chap. III, *passim*);

3) The application of "all possible anti-monopoly measures" wherever necessary (p. 299), including the free importation of foreign commodities to assure competitive pricing and production efficiency ("Even in those branches where concentration and specialization of production are inevitably of great importance . . . market competition must be applied through foreign trade"—p. 300);

4) The use of imports "to exert competitive pressure on prices and quality of home products" (p. 340);

5) The establishment of a direct relationship between the incomes of workers and managers and their individual as well as their enterprise's economic performance ("It is clear as day that material consumption cannot yet be severed from work performance, because it is the chief incentive and without it social work would disappear"—p. 363);

6) Extension of the application of market relationships to producers of means of production



— Práce jste schopen, soudruhu náměstku. Ovšem ne té, kterou vykonáváte. *Petr Feyrer*

"You are fit for work, comrade deputy manager, but you are certainly not fit for your job."

—From *Hospodarske noviny* (Prague), Oct. 6, 1967.

[5] *Action Program of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia*, Prague, 1968, p. 48.

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("Some economists accept the necessity for, and the role of, market relationships under socialism, but do not believe that this applies to the production of means of production. . . . In order [however] that the producers' standpoint will not have a one-sided influence on production decisions and trends in the production of means of production contrary to trends in consumer needs, there must also be market relationships to correct the one-sided interests of the producers"—p. 192-93);

7) The imposition on enterprises of the obligation to repay loans so that "credit will begin to fill its real economic function" (p. 334);

8) The levying of an interest charge not only on bank credit but also "on all basic production assets and increments in circulation funds" in order to assure "the real material interest of all enterprises in the most effective possible use of investment funds and of all production assets" (p. 221);

9) Establishment of the right of enterprises to sell to one another means of production for which the seller no longer has any use (p. 221);

10) The provision, even where economic efficiency makes it advantageous to organize enterprises into branch trusts, of enough economic freedom for "the enterprises within these trusts to compete among themselves for the largest number of orders from customers" (p. 340);

11) A substantial reduction of turnover taxes, which have brought about an unnecessarily large spread between wholesale and retail prices (p. 290);

12) A shift from a differentiated to a uniform turnover tax so that retail prices can "give a true picture of demand and . . . [can] signal to production the consumer-demand trends" (p. 291); and

13) Reduction "to a minimum" of state subsidies for production investments (p. 399).

Limitations on the Market

From this summary, one might conclude that Sik advocates a virtually uncontrolled market as the basis for Czechoslovakia's New Economic Model, especially when one reads such statements as: "The need to subordinate production to society's priorities . . . is justified only under special conditions, when the economic standpoint must be explicitly and temporarily subordinated to serious political purposes" (pp. 272-273). Yet, in spite of such strong assertions, the role of the market in Sik's model is subject to important limitations. First of all, the influence of the market is restricted almost entirely to micro-economic decisions; and secondly, even at this level, many market components are either directly controlled from above or at least indirectly influenced by overriding decisions of the central planning authorities. In short, it is a "regulated market," as Sik himself termed it in a personal interview with the author in the fall of 1967, when he was still active director of the Economic Institute of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences.

First, then, although as many detailed economic decisions as possible *at the micro-level* are to be exposed to the influence of the market, major proportions *at the macro-level* are still to be decided by the central planners. Thus, not only the relative proportions of consumer and capital goods in overall production and the share of total investment to be allocated respectively to agriculture, industry, transportation, etc. are to be centrally determined; but presumably, total investment in the production of clothing, or even of textile goods, for example, would also be planned at the center, although such details as styles, patterns, or colors of dresses would be left to the discretion of individual enterprises.

Sik, moreover, considers it particularly important that long-term plans concerning such matters as technological development or manpower training be formulated centrally inasmuch as these affect *future* production to satisfy *future* demand. As guides for making such decisions, Sik regards *present* market demand as inadequate, and the dispersed considerations of individual enterprises as necessarily unscientific (p. 341). The central, long-term plans (five years or longer) would presumably be based on extensive market research leading to scientific estimates of future production and marketing possibilities, and they would not be detailed because "the more general in nature and the smaller in number the indicators of a long-term plan, the more stable the plan" (p. 152). Short-range plans would then be used to fill in details and to introduce corrections into the long-range plans in response to prevailing market conditions, but the short and long-term plans would have to be in basic agreement. In other words, "according to actual conditions in production and on the market, the enterprises must plan their annual production programs in harmony with their long-range plans, which are part of the state plans" (p. 154).

Secondly, in addition to keeping general long-range planning in the hands of the central authorities, the Sik model would make the market itself subject (a) to indirect monetary and fiscal controls, and (b) where necessary, to direct controls. In the

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former category, strong influence can, for instance, be exerted over the investment activities of enterprises by changing interest rates (both on loans granted and on enterprise funds deposited in banks) and by altering the duration of loans in accordance with economic development needs (p. 335). In order that credit may be used "as an instrument for the planned orientation of investments," Sik further advocates a tax policy which would oblige enterprises to depend to a certain extent on credit for their basic capital investment (p. 345). He also argues that there must be a "central financial body capable of coordinating or directing the day-to-day development of all financial processes" and of manipulating various financial levers so as to prevent the "undesirable development" of certain sectors of the economy (p. 350). It should be added here that although Sik's model calls for all investments in production to be financed mainly from the funds of enterprises themselves, with help from the credit system (p. 231), it clearly demands "a planned development of investments that renew and expand production capacity" (p. 220).

As for direct state controls over the operation of market processes, Sik proposes, for instance, that the basic wage of workers be guaranteed by the state (p. 189); that prices be administered centrally "for a limited number of the most important goods" (p. 277); and that increases in selling prices not be permitted "in cases where the production of scarce goods can be quickly increased" or where "the producing or trading enterprise merely wants to get a higher income in this way" (p. 269). These few examples suffice to underline Sik's own statement that while "the negation of market relationships undermines the initiative of enterprises . . . and obstructs efficiency, the rehabilitation of market relations must not be conceived as a weakening of the principle of planning the economy of the society as a whole" (p. 342).

An Evaluation

In this author's opinion, then, the system of economic planning and administration advocated by Dr. Sik can in no way be properly termed "counter-revolutionary" or a "return to capitalism," as the Soviet, Polish, East German and Bulgarian press has charged. For notwithstanding its provisions for increased utilization of market relationships, the Sik model not only retains the fundamentals of socialist central planning, but it nowhere envisages the slightest retreat from social ownership of the means of production. Beyond this, Sik's entire analysis is steeped in Marxist terminology, follows Marxist lines of economic reasoning, and contains the familiar derogatory references to "monopoly capitalism" (*e.g.*, p. 354), "parasitic consumption by capitalists" (p. 170), and the "anarchic way" in which manpower is distributed and redistributed under capitalism (p. 235).

The paradoxical fact is that the changes in the mechanism of economic planning and administration provided for in Sik's New Economic Model run essentially along the same lines—though differing in specific details—as those either officially adopted or already introduced in the Soviet Union and all the other East European socialist countries except Albania. In essence, they are hardly more than Libermanism with a vengeance—somewhat more far-reaching and thorough, somewhat more reasoned out theoretically, and giving an impression of greater urgency, which is understandable enough in the light of Czechoslovakia's increasingly precarious economic situation in recent years. It goes without saying that the Sik reforms are considerably less extensive than those which Yugoslavia has been working on for some time now. But even in Hungary, for instance, the author found, in discussions with leading economists, planners, and party and government officials last spring, an approach quite similar to that of Sik, who at least at that time still seemed to be held in high esteem in Budapest. Indeed, Hungary, following a period of preliminary experimentation with various economic reforms, officially introduced on January 1, 1968, its own "New Economic Mechanism," which contains many features advocated by Sik. Under the new system, the income of Hungarian industrial workers and managers is now related to their own and their enterprises' economic performance; fiscal and monetary controls have largely taken the place of direct administrative commands as a means of inducing conformity with the central plan, which is no longer legally binding on enterprises; and substantial advances are being made towards a freer and more flexible market-influenced pricing system.

Because Sik's economic model would base foreign commerce, as well as internal economic activity, primarily on principles of economic rationality rather than on political considerations, there is a good possibility that its full implementation would lead to an expansion of Czechoslovakia's economic relations with the West. But surely Czechoslovakia does not stand alone among the socialist countries in her desire to increase trade with Western industrial countries (especially the United States), as attested to

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by numerous interviews which the author had with economists and officials throughout Eastern Europe. Even the Soviet Union has not been averse to improving trade relations with the West where this would benefit her economically; yet it is understandable that the Soviets should find it economically and politically advantageous to control and restrict Czechoslovakia's trade relations with countries outside the Soviet orbit.

Although Sik's terminology, analysis and general approach are Marxist, there are passages in his writings which the Soviets doubtless found ideologically objectionable. At least the more orthodox Soviet leaders no doubt resented, for instance, Sik's blunt statement that "only a dogmatic concept of Marxist-Leninist theory could lead one to deny the existence of certain new phenomena for the reason that they were not expressed and clarified at some time by the founders of Marxism" (p. 20). They may have been even more resentful of his harsh references to the latest edition of a Soviet textbook, (*Political Economy*, Moscow, 1963), which he criticized as "simply a repetition of the Stalinist theoretical explanation of socialist commodity production" (p. 306), and whose Soviet authors he charged with failing or refusing to comprehend "the character of economic contradictions under socialism" and attempting to "absolutize planning and conscious direction of socialist economic management" (p. 312).

Official Soviet pronouncements and actions both prior to and since the August intervention leave no doubt that the Kremlin leaders were incensed by the prevalence in Czechoslovakia of this sort of unrestrained criticism, and by the new climate of freedom that allowed such criticism to be openly voiced. Political and cultural liberalization nevertheless progressed rapidly in the months before the August occupation, accompanied by efforts on the part of the Dubcek regime to push ahead with the thorough implementation of the economic reforms. Indeed, the relatively free discussion of these reforms, as well as the progressively greater freedom of action accorded to lower echelons of the productive machinery as a result of the gradual implementation of the New Economic Model, appear to have reinforced the trends toward political and cultural liberalization in general. When questioned by this writer in the fall of 1967 whether he thought that implementation of the New Economic Model might have the effect of furthering political liberalization, Sik replied that while there was no necessary linear relationship between the economic changes and the political climate in the country, he felt that the

TARGET—OTA SIK

O. Sik, in many of his statements, has openly and grossly slandered Czechoslovakia's socialist road of development and has tried to push through his so-called "New Economic Model," which means nothing else than turning the country towards the road of capitalism and dependence on the capitalist great powers.

—*Pravda* and *Izvestia* (Moscow), Sept. 2, 1968.

The economic policy of Ota Sik . . . was intended gradually to restore capitalism under the pretense of correcting actual and systematically invented "mistakes". . . .

He left the country for Belgrade, obviously to study there how to achieve annual industrial growth rates of one percent or less.

—*Neues Deutschland* (East Berlin), Aug. 25, 1968.

Sik was an open leader of the elements which, without adducing any proof, denied all socialist development of the Czechoslovak economy and proposed to give wide opportunities to private capital. Sik was the man who directed the discussion to please revisionist and counterrevolutionary elements and to push the economy of the country onto the capitalist road. Sik was the man who came out against cooperation by Czechoslovakia with the socialist countries.

—*Bulgarian Telegraph Agency*, Aug. 25, 1968.

Czechoslovakia's "New Economic Model," the implementation of which started in the years 1966-67, was aimed at rationalizing planning and coordinating market elements with planned decisions. The deformations introduced in this model after last January would lead to disastrous results.

If Sik's model were introduced, the market mechanism would inevitably speed up existing disproportions, as the Yugoslav example has proven. Our Czechoslovak comrades are better aware than we of the political consequences of this disproportion, which in the long run constitutes a threat to the state integrity of Czechoslovakia.

—*Trybuna ludu* (Warsaw), Sept. 2, 1968.

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economic reforms *would* contribute toward the advancement of freedom and democracy in Czechoslovakia. Events prior to the Soviet intervention seem to have borne out this view.

Apart from any objection they might have to Sik's use of Marxist terminology, Western economists could find much to criticize in his economic analysis. They would surely challenge its almost total disregard of marginal utility, marginal productivity, marginal cost, and marginal revenues, and thus would find his price theory wanting even though he gives greater recognition to market demand in price determination than most Marxist economists. They would regret the disregard of land as a factor of production which can be used for alternate purposes and therefore has an "opportunity cost." [6] And they might well question some of the arguments Sik advances in support of the practical possibility of welding market and plan into a truly efficient economic mechanism. But even though Western economists might differ in their individual estimates of the level of economic efficiency achievable with Sik's model, they would probably agree that it represents a significant improvement over the old system.

The Outlook

The New Economic Model was officially introduced in all branches of the Czechoslovak economy on January 1, 1967. However, the dismantling of the old economic system, the transformation of habits established over two decades, and the shift to a new order could obviously not be accomplished overnight. Still, the Dubcek regime was clearly bent on speeding up the implementation of the economic reforms, and had it not been for the Soviet intervention, the following months and years could have provided an empirical test of the efficacy of the New Economic Model and thus aided Czechoslovak economists and planners in devising further alterations and improvements. For several reasons, this course of events is not now likely to transpire. First, the Soviets will undoubtedly disallow at least certain aspects of the reforms (especially in the area of foreign trade), thereby disrupting the internal cohesiveness of the model. Secondly, economic liberalization, decentralization, and experimentation are unlikely to flourish in an environment that discourages free discussion and the free exchange of ideas. Finally, the occupation itself has created a kind of economic emergency which will probably necessitate at least a partial deviation from the New Economic Model—(*e.g.*, free price formation might prove hazardous in a time of severe shortage of consumer goods).

In his book, Sik foresaw the possibility that the practical realization of his New Economic Model might encounter the "opposition of leading economic or social bodies" (p. 46). However, he termed this opposition temporary and affirmed his belief that "under socialism . . . every progressive social finding will prevail, sooner or later, as a prerequisite for overcoming growing economic or social contradictions." He was more right on the first score than he himself perhaps imagined. How correct he will prove on the latter, and how long "sooner or later" will be, remain open questions.

[6] *I.e.*, when land is used in the production of commodity A, its "cost" should be calculated in terms of possible production of commodity B, representing its next most valuable use.

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The New Crisis in European Communism

By Kevin Devlin

In the history of international communism the Czechoslovak crisis of 1968 marks a turning-point comparable with the expulsion of Yugoslavia from the socialist camp in 1948 or the outbreak of the Sino-Soviet conflict in the early 1960's. Its complex consequences are still unfolding, but one thing already seems clear: this was the rock on which "European communism" finally foundered. Broadly speaking, there are now two Communist movements in Europe. One grouping consists of the non-ruling parties in the West, at present in opportunistic alliance with the independent Rumanian regime and (more firmly) with the Czechoslovak and Yugoslav reformists. The second grouping, much stronger in power-political if not in ideological terms, consists of the five Warsaw Pact regimes, headed by the Soviet Union, which occupied Czechoslovakia with the aim of reversing the "Dubcek course" of socialist democratization.

The occupation—"a crime against hope, a crime against socialism, a crime against the future," in the words of the French prophet of revisionist communism, Roger Garaudy [1]—has created a widening gulf between the two groupings, which are now separated by a basic and apparently enduring conflict of political interests.

That conflict existed long before the "Czechoslovak spring" and last summer's repressive intervention; indeed, it had found classical expression four years ago in Togliatti's "Yalta Testament." [2] In varying but steadily increasing degree, the legal Communist parties of Western Europe were taking the path of revisionist adaptation to their pluralistic, democratic environment—committing themselves not to the Leninist goal of revolution (which they

Political Analyst for Radio Free Europe in Munich, Germany, Mr. Devlin has authored many studies of Communist activities in the non-Communist world, some of which have appeared in these pages.

[1] R. Garaudy, preface to *La liberté en sursis—Prague 1968* (a collection of texts by Czechoslovak leaders, published in October 1968), p. 24. For the PCF Central Committee's censure of Garaudy's breaches of party discipline, see below.

[2] In August 1964 Palmiro Togliatti died of a heart attack while vacationing in the Soviet Union. Over Soviet objections, his last memorandum—written in Yalta—was published by his successors as his "testament." In it, Togliatti criticized Soviet reluctance to eliminate the remaining vestiges of Stalinism and to condone some measure of cultural and political diversity under communism. He also charged that the Soviets were precipitating a permanent split in the Communist movement by their drastic policy toward China. For an English translation, see *The New York Times*, Sept. 5, 1964.

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had long since abandoned in practice) but to the constitutional pursuit of "structural reforms" through electoral alliances and to the preservation of bourgeois liberties. The conflict between these revisionist tendencies and the positions and practices of the Eastern Communist regimes was obvious, but for many reasons it was muted and its effect on interparty policies limited. While Western Communist parties disavowed any intention of following the totalitarian Eastern model of socialism, and were generally quick to dissociate themselves from unpopular regime practices in such fields as cultural affairs, religious policies and the treatment of Jews, they were restrained from more systematic criticism not only by habits of solidarity but by an awareness of convergent interests on other levels.

This limited convergence of interests found expression in the first conference of European Communist parties, held in Karlovy Vary, Czechoslovakia, in April 1967.[3] The conference adumbrated a pattern of policies designed to exploit disarray within the Western alliance during the crucial period leading up to the renegotiation of the NATO treaty in 1969; the consequent emphasis on East-West detente was backed by an across-the-board appeal to non-Communist "peace-loving" forces in the West.

But (as Luigi Longo has now bitterly observed [4]) the East-West strategy elaborated at Karlovy Vary was never really implemented by the East European regimes. Instead, the Soviet leadership, which had already reacted nervously to West Germany's *Ostpolitik*, showed an increasing concern over "what is defined as 'ideological aggression'" (in Longo's acerbic phrase). Behind this return to defensive dogmatism—this fear of Western influences—lay a conflict between the objective need for socio-economic modernization of Soviet life and the subjective will to maintain the Communist party's control of all aspects of Soviet society.

Developments in Czechoslovakia from mid-1967 on, and particularly after the historic "January Plenum" set the new course of socialist democratization, represented a direct challenge to the ascendant Soviet mood of defensive conservatism. The sudden tide of euphoric liberalization in this strategically central country meant (in Soviet eyes) a further weakening of the bloc and at the same time increased the real or imagined dangers of "ideological subversion"—with the virus of infection now coming not only from the Western imperialists but from a Communist state which had abolished censorship, ended secret police activity, opened its frontiers, rehabilitated purge victims, and decentralized authority in all spheres, and which in addition was moving toward new forms of political pluralism which would transform the role of the Communist Party. The Action Program invited reaction.

Political Stake in Reform

For the West European Communist parties, on the other hand, the changes in Czechoslovakia opened up exciting new prospects: here, at last, was the promise of a socialist society to which Western Communists could point as a relevant example, without endlessly insisting that their own pluralistic, democratic paths would not be patterned after existing Communist regimes. For a few months after the January plenum, as the Novotnyites fought their rearguard action, the Western parties' reactions were generally cautious (a notable exception was the Italian party, which made its support for the reformers eloquently clear from the first [5]). Even before Novotny's resignation from the presidency in March, however, the British, French and Austrian Communist press had joined *L'Unità* in providing sympathetic coverage of the Czechoslovak renaissance, reflecting a growing awareness that Western Communists had an important political stake in the Dubcek regime's efforts to give "to socialist society its true face of liberty, humanity and democracy," as Luigi Longo put it.[6]

Decisive here was the stand of the French Communist Party, which over three years had adopted notably revisionist positions in domestic affairs but had yet to oppose the Kremlin on a major policy issue. In his Central Committee speech of April 19, Secretary-General Waldeck Rochet now made it clear that the PCF was prepared to face this possibility, as he pledged solidarity with the Prague re-

[3] This was the first pan-European Communist conference; West European Communist conferences had already been held in Rome (1959), Brussels (1965) and Vienna (1966). However, the Karlovy Vary meeting was as much a demonstration of disunity as of apparent unity: it was boycotted by the Dutch, Norwegian and Icelandic parties, as well as by the ruling parties of Albania, Rumania and Yugoslavia, while the independent Swedish Communists sent only an observer.

[4] See his concluding address at the Central Committee meeting of the Italian Communist Party in August: *L'Unità*, Aug. 30, 1968.

[5] See, for example, Giuseppe Boffa's series of articles in *L'Unità*, Jan. 18, 23, and 25, 1968.

[6] *L'Unità*, March 27, 1968.

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formers and wished them "great successes in the application of their program aiming at the expansion of socialism." [7]

Rochet's declaration of support for the Dubcek course was marked by stress on the leading role of the Communist party and was much more cautiously expressed than the statements of his Italian comrades. Nevertheless, the die had been cast: the PCF-PCI alliance, institutionalized in late 1965 after years of rivalry and friction, was to be a decisive factor in the reaction of West European Communist parties to the Czechoslovak drama.

The next act of that drama was marked by a complex interregime confrontation, as the tempestuous development of Czechoslovak liberalization after March was met by Soviet, East German and Polish attempts to apply the brakes through gradually increasing political pressures. In resisting these coercive moves the Czechoslovak leadership was sustained by unprecedented popular support—a radically new element in East European political life—but it also had allies in the international movement. For now the Western Communist parties, spearheaded by the Franco-Italian alliance, began to take a hand in the developing political struggle.

Once more the Italians took the lead. Secretary-General Longo's visit to Prague in early May—the first by a Western Communist leader since the final ouster of Novotny—was a calculated intervention which brought the Dubcek leadership valuable support at a time when premonitory pressures from Moscow, Warsaw and East Berlin were becoming evident. At a press conference in Prague after three days of interparty talks, Longo stressed that "what is happening in Czechoslovakia today is an experiment which will also help certain socialist countries, and in particular the Communist parties of the capitalist countries, in the struggle to create a new socialist society—young, open and modern." [8]

Pro-Czechoslovak Initiatives

Throughout June and early July, as the pressures of the conservative regimes increased, Western Communist support for the Czechoslovaks became more outspoken and more principled, particularly on the part of the Italians, French, Austrians and British.

However, the time came when something more than encouraging words was needed. On July 14—as the leaders of the five interventionist powers were meeting in Warsaw to draft their coercive letter—Waldeck Rochet flew to Moscow in the company of two emissaries of the PCI, Giancarlo Pajetta and Carlo Galuzzi. It was an historic occasion: the first time that the two leading Communist parties of Western Europe had taken a joint initiative in opposition to Soviet policies.

During their three-day talks with Soviet leaders, the French and Italian envoys went beyond a defense of the Czechoslovak regime's capacity to pursue its program of democratization without endangering socialism: as an Italian Communist spokesman later revealed, they also warned "the parties concerned . . . that for us only a political solution was admissible, and that any kind of armed intervention [would be] unacceptable." [9] A few days later, on July 23, the Central Committee of the PCF sent its Soviet counterpart a letter criticizing the interventionist content of the Warsaw Letter and emphasizing that the French party was "absolutely op-

[7] *L'Humanité*, April 20, 1968.

Eduard Goldstuecker calls for "Freedom!! Democracy, Socialist Humanism." Fat bureaucrat laments "You see, he wants a return to the First Republic, capitalism, unemployment, begging, and *monks!*"

—From Dikobraz (Prague), June 13, 1968.

[8] *L'Unità*, May 8, 1968.

[9] G. Boffa, "Come è maturato il nostro giudizio contro l'intervento," *L'Unità*, Sept. 10, 1968.

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posed" to military intervention and would not be able to approve it.[10]

Between the private warning and its formal repetition, the PCF—in obvious agreement with the PCI—took another important pro-Dubcek initiative. On July 17, within hours of Waldeck Rochet's return from Moscow, a Politburo communiqué proposed "a meeting of Communist and workers' parties of Europe in the coming days" to discuss the Czechoslovak situation "and the problems arising from it." Four days later—after the Secretary-General had paid a flying visit to Prague—the Politburo announced that 14 other parties (representing the great majority of the West European movement) had accepted the proposal, but that since there was now a possibility of talks between the Czechoslovak party and the other ruling parties concerned, plans for a pan-European conference should be dropped "for the present."

There is reason to believe that this was a rather subtle exercise in interparty diplomacy—that, in fact, the PCF never expected the proposed conference to take place. Waldeck Rochet must have known beforehand that (as the Austrian Communist *Volksstimme* later confirmed) the Russians and their interventionist allies were opposed to a plan which conflicted with their own moves for an intrabloc conference at which they could apply cumulative pressure against the Czechoslovaks. Moreover, he did not need to fly to Prague on July 19 to learn that the Czechoslovak leadership, while grateful for the support implicit in his proposal, would regard a pan-European conference as a dangerous admission that foreign parties could properly intervene in its affairs.

What calculations, then, lay behind the French initiative? First, it publicly established the claim of the Western parties that Czechoslovak developments were a matter of legitimate concern to them. Secondly, it mobilized West European Communist forces on behalf of the embattled Czechoslovaks, as a steady stream of party statements and pro-Dubcek comments welcomed the French proposal. The most important of these was the Finnish Politburo's announcement that it would attend the proposed conference if a majority of European parties favored it (the Western parties constitute a majority). This was a clear sign that the third major Communist Party of Western Europe would not withdraw its expressed support for Czechoslovak democratization,[11] despite its special geopolitical position *vis-à-vis* the Soviet regime.

Against Intervention

Meanwhile, the crisis had been sharpened—and the issues placed before the entire world movement—by the publication of the coercive Warsaw Letter (July 17) and the Czechoslovak reply to it (July 20). The result was a sort of preview of reactions to the invasion a month later—with the difference that many parties which maintained an embarrassed silence over the Letter were obliged to take a stand on the invasion. The interventionist regimes could cite only 15 non-ruling parties (about a fifth of the total) as supporting the Warsaw Letter.

The reaction of the West European Communists was the strongest and most concerted. Out of 21 parties, only four took a pro-Soviet stand: the Luxemburg CP, the Greek party (KKE), the West German KPD and the West Berlin SED. The last two were client parties, so dependent upon the Ulbricht regime that their alignment had virtually no political significance. As for the Greeks, it was not the KKE but one faction of its divided exile leadership which endorsed the Letter; the rival faction took a pro-Czechoslovak stand, as did the clandestine party apparatus inside Greece.[12] As far as Western Europe was concerned, then, the signatories of the Warsaw Letter were left with the backing of the Luxemburg CP (estimated membership: 400-500). When the post-invasion chips were down, this unimpressive grouping of loyalists was augmented by the Portuguese CP (after initial wavering) and by the Cypriot AKEL (at the cost of internal dissension[13]). For the rest, the pro-Czechoslovak front not only held but was strengthened by the tragically deceptive outcome of the Cierna-Bratislava talks early in August.

[10] The sending of the July 23 letter was confirmed, and its substance indicated, in an unsigned statement dated Sept. 1, in the August-September issue of the PCF's theoretical organ, *Cahiers du communisme*, pp. 16–19.

[11] As early as March 19 an editorial in the Finnish party organ, *Kansan Uutiset*, concluded that if the Dubcek regime kept to its course of socialist democratization, "valuable results can be expected, not only from the viewpoint of Czechoslovakia but also from that of the entire Communist movement."

[12] The split within the exile leadership had taken place at a KKE Central Committee plenum held in Budapest in February 1968, when Secretary-General Koliyannis, with the aid of a "packed" gathering, expelled three of the seven Politburo members and later half of the 38 committee members. The rebels, led by Mitsos Partsalidis, then formed a rival "Unitary Central Committee." The party leadership inside Greece put forward a plan for ending the split, but this was rejected in polemical terms by the Koliyannis faction.

[13] *L'Unità*, Aug. 25, 1968.

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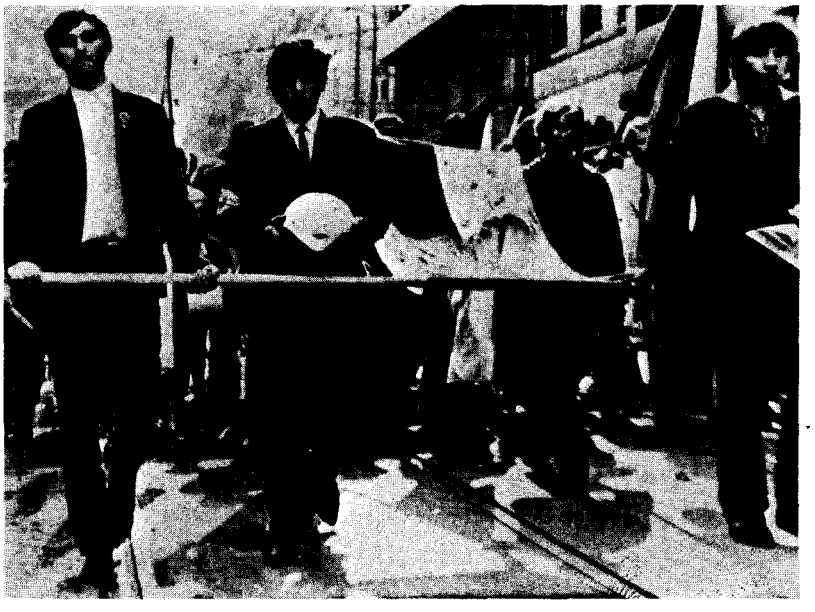
The chorus of protest sparked by the sudden invasion made little secret of the resentment felt by the Western parties. Even the Finnish party, with the nuances required by its special geopolitical position, declared that it could not see the necessity for the "measures" used, and considered that they had "harmed the whole international workers' movement" (its electoral front organization, the SKDL, more bluntly described the invasion as a violation of socialist principles).[14] The Secretary-General of the neighboring Swedish party, C. H. Hermansson, went so far as to suggest that diplomatic relations between Stockholm and Moscow should be suspended until the occupation ended.

In general, however, initial Western Communist reactions, though firm, were measured: many comments described the invasion as a tragic and unjustifiable error. The Western parties, faced suddenly with unprecedented crisis, were waiting anxiously to see what would happen in Czechoslovakia. What happened was that the invasion failed to achieve its primary purpose, which clearly was to produce a counterregime *à la Kadar;* and the sophisticated passive resistance of the Czechoslovak masses, under united reformist-Communist leadership (despite the abduction of Dubcek and others) showed that the political struggle over the Czechoslovak experiment had not ended but rather entered a new phase. The West European parties therefore moved from condemnation to pro-Czechoslovak action.

The general objective of this activity was to help the Czechoslovak reformers salvage as much as possible of the democratization program and regain as much as possible of their sovereignty, on the basis of a "favorable" interpretation of the Moscow Agreement of August 26 and its secret protocol. To this end, as we shall see, the Western parties attempted to bring certain counterpressures to bear. At the same time, however, they had to cope with the efforts of domestic adversaries to exploit the crisis, while facing the problem of dissension—on both wings—within their own ranks. For these and other reasons the degree and manner of pro-Czechoslovak commitment varied considerably from party to party. Thus, the conservative Danish CP deplored the occupation but was clearly reluctant to undertake any radical criticism of the Soviet regime, whereas the revisionist Swedish Communist leaders —their prospects in a crucial election ruined by the invasion—were under no such restraints. But, despite such differences, the front held.

The pro-Czechoslovak activity of the Western European parties developed on several levels simultaneously. On the level of assessment and commentary, the gulf between them and the interventionist regimes widened steadily. Italian, British, Austrian and French Communist spokesmen were

[14] The statements of the Finnish party Politburo and the SKDL Executive Committee were published in the August 23 issue of the party organ *Kansan Uutiset*—which, however, omitted the SKDL's demand for the withdrawal of the occupation troops. At the belated 50th anniversary celebrations of the Finnish CP on September 29, Chairman Saarinen clashed publicly with the Soviet delegate, Konotop, on the Czechoslovak issue: "We hope that the unheard-of, abnormal situation created on August 21 . . . will be rectified as soon as possible," he declared.



Students in Prague carry a blood-stained flag and the helmet of a man who was run over by a Soviet tank on August 21, the first day of the Soviet-led invasion.

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particularly vigorous in their systematic demolition of the interventionists' arguments defending the invasion and continued occupation. "The arguments about tens of thousands of armed counter-revolutionaries, hidden caches of arms, loans from the West, moves to leave the Warsaw Treaty, tourists, the radio, the alleged low working-class composition of the Congress delegates, and so on, have all been countered or refuted by the Czechoslovaks, and can in no way amount to a counter-revolutionary situation," Jack Woddis told the British CP's Executive Committee in a notably devastating analysis of the interventionist positions.[15] What the East Germans denounced as counterrevolutionary manifestations, said the Austrian Secretary-General, Franz Muhri, was "in reality a new form of the leading role of the party."[16] In the same speech, Muhri noted scathingly that debate on one side was met by polemic on the other, as regime media attacked Western Communist attitudes without disclosing what they were. Western party spokesmen also took note of and criticized violations of the "no-interference" clause of the Moscow Agreement, especially by the Russians and East Germans.[17]

One point the West European parties made with repeated emphasis: that they had taken their stand on the military intervention as a matter of principle. It was as Communists that they had to condemn the violation of norms accepted by the entire world movement—the sovereignty of each socialist state, the equality and autonomy of all parties, the right of each national Communist leadership to determine its own policies. Thus, André Wurmser spoke for the French CP, with its long history of unconditional loyalty to Moscow:

In truth, the tragic decision of this month of August is wrong not only according to our opinion but according to *our law*, the law of the Communist parties of the whole world. . . .

. . . *who* took the responsibility for the intervention? Not *the* Communist parties, since the French Communist Party, the Italian party, the very great majority of the 81 parties that signed the 1960 declaration, were opposed to it, as was that declaration itself, but *some* Communist parties, setting themselves up, on their own authority, as judges without appeal.[18]

Here we may note an important qualitative difference between Western Communist reactions to the occupation of Czechoslovakia and the essentially defensive and temporary attitudes they had adopted on past occasions in dissociating themselves from unpopular regime practices (cultural neo-Zhdanovism, repression of religion, anti-semitism, *etc.*). The challenge which the occupation posed to the political interests of the Western parties was so direct and damaging that something much more than temporary dissociation was needed: an open, enduring and principled repudiation of the theory and practice of totalitarian communism. If the Western Communist perspective—envisaging gradual, constitutional advance toward a pluralistic socialist democracy which would preserve bourgeois liberties—were to retain credibility, these parties would have to undertake a systematic critique of the totalitarian model. "We must begin a discussion on the deeper, more extensive problems, causes, lessons and conclusions," said the Austrian Franz Muhri; and among the subjects he listed, with extensive revisionist commentary, were "the principles of relations between Communist parties and between socialist countries," the "problem of socialist democracy in the socialist countries," and the question of party autonomy and national roads to socialism.[19] Similar calls for a radical theoretical reassessment through open discussion came from the Italian, British and French Communists, among others.

The sophisticated Italians took the lead in tackling what one of them called "the problem of a more profound historical and political judgment on the whole reality of the socialist countries."[20] In a series of articles in the weekly *Rinascita*, such spokesmen as Amendola, Ingrao, Gruppi, Berlinguer, and Longo himself analyzed the relationship between socialism and democracy and between party and state, developing an indictment of centralized rule, censorship, ideological dogmatism, administrative coercion and, in general, the "contradiction between the nature of socialism, which demands the participation of the masses in the administration of power, and the way in which, for objective historical reasons and through the errors of leaders, the socialist regime took shape."[21] The Czechoslovak experiment, which was producing

[15] *Morning Star*, Sept. 24, 1968; see also J. R. Campbell's destructive review of the Soviet "White Book," *On Events in Czechoslovakia; ibid.*, Oct. 10.

[16] Report to the Central Committee plenum, *Volksstimme*, Sept. 15.

[17] See, for example, Antoine Acquaviva's report in *L'Humanité*, Oct. 16.

[18] André Wurmser, "Le mois tragique," *France Nouvelle*, Sept. 4, 1968; original emphasis.

[19] Central Committee report, *Volksstimme*, Sept. 15.

[20] E. Berlinguer, "Le contraddizioni delle società socialiste," *Rinascita*, Sept. 27.

[21] L. Gruppi, "Un socialismo gestito dal basso," *ibid.*, Oct. 4.

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"a democratic dialectic of society," put in question the "centralized and bureaucratic character" of regimes which had failed to implement the limited promises of the 20th CPSU Congress [22]; hence the intervention was linked with "the increased resistance of the political superstructure [in Eastern Europe] to the necessary adaptations and renewals." [23]

The Conference Issue

The West European parties' concern was not limited to protecting their own interests by dissociating themselves from the occupation and the totalitarian regimes which carried it out; they were also actively engaged in seeking ways to support the Czechoslovaks in the complex political confrontation which followed the invasion. As Franz Muhri put it in his mid-September report to the Austrian Central Committee, the question now was "how, under these new circumstances, we can best support the CPCS and best contribute to a peaceful political solution" enabling Czechoslovakia to "continue on the path of socialist democratization . . . , so that an example is created which is a help to the whole West European movement in the struggle for socialism."

The ability of the Western parties, individually or collectively, to influence the outcome was of course limited: the occupation itself was a demonstration that their interests were a minor factor in Soviet policy-making, compared with the will to maintain Soviet hegemony in the bloc and ward off "ideological subversion." Nevertheless, there were still ways in which they could bring certain pro-Czechoslovak pressures to bear upon the Russians, particularly on the level of interparty diplomacy, by appealing to Soviet policy objectives that had been downgraded but not abandoned by the decision to invade. Such activity was signalled by the hectic, though discreet, round of interparty meetings which followed the invasion. Here again the PCI took the lead, sending envoys to Paris, London, Bucharest, Belgrade, Sofia, Budapest, Vienna, Moscow, and Latin America,[24] as well as receiving foreign delegations in Rome.

The most promising field for maneuver was provided by the long-planned international conference of Communist parties, which was to open in Moscow on November 25. The PCI (whose shift to a conditional pro-conference stand a year earlier had made possible a revival of the project) was the first to outline the Western strategy. A week after the invasion Luigi Longo indicated his party's stand—that the conference should be postponed until there had been "a definitive and satisfactory settlement" of the crisis.[25] In a later interview with the magazine *L'Astrolabio*, in which he ranged perceptively over the whole conflict of interests and views between Western revisionists and the interventionist regimes, Longo made it official: until the crisis had been satisfactorily settled (through the restoration of state sovereignty and party autonomy to the Czechoslovaks), it would "not be opportune or useful, or perhaps even possible" to hold the conference.[26]

At the time Longo made this announcement, it was learned later, the Hungarian party—clearly acting at the behest of the Kremlin—had already sent out invitations (dated September 2) asking all Communist parties to gather in Budapest on September 30 for a plenary session of the preparatory commission for the conference; thus the stage was set for a confrontation.

Toward late September a series of statements by West European parties revealed the plans for a preparatory meeting but at the same time demanded postponement of the Moscow conference in view of the new situation created by the occupation of Czechoslovakia. Statements to this effect, often using similar formulations ("neither useful nor opportune"), were issued within a few days by the Austrian, Italian, French, British, Swiss and Belgian parties, and the Italians reported that the Spanish CP was taking the same stand. The Swedish, Norwegian and Icelandic parties went farther: because of the occupation, they would not even

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[22] *Ibid.*

[23] Berlinguer, *op. cit.*

[24] In Latin America Giuliano Pajetta had talks with Communist leaders of Colombia, Peru, Chile, Argentina, Uruguay and Brazil, but did not succeed in changing their attitudes of (sometimes qualified) support for the invasion. While the Venezuelan CP vacillated, only the Mexican and Dominican parties broke the pro-Soviet front in Latin America. A similar front among the Arab Communist leaderships was broken by the Tunisian and Moroccan parties. In Asia the most important pro-Czechoslovak party was the Japanese CP. The "rightist" Indian CP adopted a compromise position, regretting the intervention without condemning it; the Ceylonese (also facing a secessionist rival party) tried to do the same, but pressure from its coalition partners led it to take a stand against the occupation. The invasion was also condemned publicly by the Communist parties of Australia, Réunion and Canada.

[25] *L'Unità*, Aug. 30, 1968.

[26] *Ibid.*, Sept. 8, 1968.

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attend the Budapest preparatory meeting. The Dutch party (CPN) had long since made it clear that it would have nothing to do with any conference sponsored by the Russians; as its manifesto condemning the occupation put it:

The CPN has for years seriously criticized the leadership of the Soviet Union . . . . [It] has refused to join in conferences and celebrations which could encourage the present leaders in the USSR and their supporters. In fact, it has broken off all contacts with them.[27]

The conservative Danish CP, while maintaining its anti-occupation stand, still held that the conference should be convened on November 25; and the same was true of the handful of West European parties which had condoned the invasion. The Finnish party, because of its special position, took no public stand on the issue, but neither had it withdrawn its criticism of the occupation; and its chairman, Aarne Saarinen, was later to state that "one pre-condition for holding [the conference] is the normalization of the situation in Czechoslovakia." [28]

Thus, a solid grouping of West European delegations would go to Budapest to demand that the Moscow conference be postponed because of the occupation, while a smaller group of parties would boycott the preparatory meeting in protest. It seems probable that by this time the Russians had resigned themselves to the postponement of the conference—indeed, they quite likely wanted it postponed, to give them time to recoup some of the political losses caused by the invasion and, in particular, to give some legitimacy to the continued occupation/intervention through a status-of-forces agreement imposed upon the Czechoslovaks. But by getting in first with a public demand for postponement on account of the invasion, the Western Communist leaderships partly frustrated this objective, since the CPSU would suffer a serious loss in inter-party prestige by accepting a postponement already directly linked with the occupation.

The Czechoslovak question was not formally on the agenda at Budapest, but the diligent lobbyists of the PCI were certainly right in reporting that it dominated the two-day meeting. The face-saving device adopted—the decision that the preparatory commission would meet again on November 17 to "discuss the date" of the conference after individual leaderships had re-examined the matter—could not hide the Soviet setback. As the vindictive Albanians put it, the November conference was "dead under the chains of the Soviet tanks that occupied Czechoslovakia." [29] The Italian delegate, Enrico Berlinguer, was quick to claim that the Budapest decisions "correspond substantially to the positions taken and the proposals made by our party, reflect conditions which exist at present in relations between parties, and in our opinion are in the interests of the entire international . . . movement." [30] He went on to link the PCI's attitude to the conference with the "need to overcome as rapidly as possible the abnormal situation created in Czechoslovakia and the limitations now imposed upon the full exercise of sovereignty and autonomy by the Czechoslovak state and party organs."

Another form of pro-Czechoslovak pressure was to raise, and keep alive, the possibility of a separate conference of West European parties to discuss the crisis and its consequences—an obvious development of the tactic which the French party had used effectively in mid-July, before the Cierna talks. Within a few days of the invasion the Austrian and Swedish party leaders had announced (after talks with the Italian and French Communists, respectively) that such an initiative was being considered. After the Budapest meeting the Austrian Secretary-General, Franz Muhri, revived the project. The Austrian CP, he said, was in favor of holding such a conference, as were the Italian and French parties and "numerous other parties of Western Europe." Its objective should be to make "a positive contribution to a peaceful political solution of the Czechoslovak problem, which would include the earliest possible withdrawal of the [occupying] troops"—and also to discuss "the basic questions of socialism" raised by the intervention.[31] A week later, however, the French CP announced that it did not think a West European conference would be "opportune in the present situation." [32] In fact, as long as the political confrontation over Czechoslovakia continued, the West European conference project was best left in abeyance, as an implicit threat or a bargaining counter—for, if it did take place, the conference would mark, in a sense, the institutionalization of the rift between the East and West European Communist movements.

[27] "Manifesto of the Communist Party of the Netherlands on Czechoslovakia," *De Waarheid*, Aug. 26, 1968.
[28] *Kansan Uutiset*, Oct. 3, 1968.
[29] *Zeri i Popullit*, Oct. 8, 1968.
[30] *L'Unità*, Oct. 3, 1968.
[31] Television interview; *Volksstimme*, Oct. 3, 1968.
[32] *L'Humanité*, Oct. 11, 1968.

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Struggle Within the WFTU

Yet another arena of confrontation was the World Federation of Trade Unions; and here the burden of pro-Czechoslovak action was borne mainly by the Italian and French Communists—or, rather, by the CGIL (Italian) and CGT (French) labor federations.[33] Both national bodies condemned the occupation on the first day. Similar first-day condemnations were issued by the Yugoslav and Rumanian labor organizations, as well as by the French Secretary-General of the WFTU, Louis Saillant. On August 22 the Czechoslovak trade union council appealed to the WFTU to take a stand against the invasion, spurring along the alliance of revisionists, reformers and independents within the international organization.

The anti-occupation allies had one great advantage: the WFTU, with headquarters in Prague, was headed by a French Secretary-General, Saillant, and an Italian President, Renato Bitossi. Thus, on August 28 Saillant was able to issue a communiqué in the name of the Secretariat denouncing the invasion as being "in conflict with all the fundamental principles on which the very existence of the WFTU rests." [34] An ill-judged attempt by Shelepin to bully the CGIL into accepting "normalization" talks in Moscow with the trade union secretariats of the five occupation powers (through a telephone call to Secretary-General Novella in Rome) was counterproductive. As Czechoslovak trade union leaders resisted interventionist pressures, the campaign on their behalf developed with talks between the CGIL and the Yugoslav trade union federation (September 13-14) and between the CGIL and CGT (September 18) on joint action for the restoration of Czechoslovak sovereignty. The CGIL executive committee explained that the French and Italian federations had reached an identity of views on the "trade-union implications of the armed intervention in Czechoslovakia . . . and on problems regarding the future of the international trade union movement *and the very survival of the WFTU*." [35]

In late September a CGT delegation flew to Moscow for talks with union leaders of the five occupying powers and then went on to Czechoslovakia to confer with Polacek; on his return, CGT Secretary-General Séguy said there had been "grave divergences" in the Moscow talks but an "identity of positions" in Prague. At the same time five CGIL delegates went to Prague, where they told the Czechs of their intention to "conduct a political battle [against the labor organizations of the occupying powers] to oblige them to open . . . a discussion of the principles and policies on which trade unionism, also [including unionism] in Communist countries, must be based." [36] A week later the CGIL team went on to Moscow for unproductive talks with Shelepin. The politically important Socialist wing of the Italian federation had already revealed that at this meeting the CGIL would "ask for the convening of the statutory bodies of the WFTU (which [action] the Soviets on the contrary are trying to put off as long as possible) in order to discuss the Czechoslovak question," and would also advance proposals for the "profound renewal of the policies and structures of the WFTU." [37] In the meantime, the WFTU General Council session, due to be held in Rostock, East Germany, on October 2-5, had already been cancelled without publicity.

The CGT delegate André Berteloot may have put the case strongly when he told the Czechoslovak trade union daily that "the WFTU is in danger of a split because it has divided into two groups holding different views on the events in Czechoslovakia.[38] But there is no room for doubt that the most important of the international front organizations—already seriously weakened as an instrument of Soviet policies through the Sino-Soviet conflict and the challenge of Italian revisionism—has entered a new stage of critical conflict. Soviet concern over this development was shown by Shelepin's mid-October trip to Tokyo, where he failed to persuade the Sohyo labor federation to modify its condemnation of the occupation. The confrontation within the WFTU (already preparing for its Eighth Congress) is far from the least important factor in the interparty crisis.

[33] Western Communist labor leaders had as great a political stake in the "Prague Spring" as their parties. The Czechoslovak trade unions were increasingly serving the interests of the workers as against those of the state, emphasizing wage gains and recognizing the right to strike. On the eve of the invasion a Soviet trade union delegation visited Prague and attacked such changes as unacceptable; this was revealed by Italian Socialist members of a CGIL mission which returned from Prague early in October (*Avanti!*, Oct. 6, 1968).

[34] This statement was endorsed next day by a meeting of the Secretariat in Prague, but it is not known how many of the 10 members were present—almost certainly not the Russian Podzerko or the Chilean Padilla. Polish, Bulgarian and East German trade union spokesmen later rejected the declaration as illicit on grounds (*inter alia*) that not all members took part.

[35] *L'Unità*, Sept. 20, 1968; emphasis added.

[36] Fernando Montagnani and Mario Didò (Socialist members of the delegation) in *Avanti!*, Oct. 6.

[37] *Avanti!*, Sept. 21.

[38] *Prace*, Sept. 28.

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Divided Ranks

What has been the effect of this crisis within the West European parties? First, we may note its disruptive impact. Each party's attitude to the occupation has become a new source of internal disunity, more troublesome at present than the earlier, more gradual process of Sino-Soviet polarization. When we say that a certain party took this stand or that on the crisis, we mean that the leadership (or a majority of the leaders) did so.

In many parties a considerable proportion of rank-and-file militants, and some leaders, were outraged by condemnation of the Soviet Union. Faithful to the habits and emotions of years, they felt that the leadership was going soft on anti-communism, so to speak: the fact that the class enemy denounced the invasion was enough reason for supporting it. In several parties (the British and Finnish, for example) estimates of the number of pro-Soviet dissidents went as high as one-third of the total membership.[39] In some countries they dominated local party organizations—Norrbotten in Sweden, Turku in Finland, Liège in Belgium, Surrey in England. There were also a few cases in which former Stalinist leaders used the crisis to attack their revisionist successors. In Sweden Hilding Hagberg called in vain for the ouster of Secretary-General Hermansson, and in Finland Aimo Aaltonen intensified his intrigues against Chairman Saarinen.

The seriousness of this internal challenge varied from one party to another, and was met in different ways.[40] But there were few expulsions or other disciplinary actions, and not many more resignations—in contrast to the impact of the Hungarian crisis 12 years earlier. In general, the pro-Soviet rebels, steeled in *partiinost*, were not ready to leave the Communist Party. At the same time, these lower- and middle-rank critics[41] were powerless to change the leadership's stand on the occupation—a stand based as much on political interests as on socialist principles.

A more interesting, if less serious, challenge came in some countries from prominent Communists who went farther than the party leadership in condemning the invasion and threatening dire consequences. In Austria, for example, such ultra-revisionist reaction was represented by the party magazine *Tagebuch* and by the veteran theorist and Central Committee member Ernst Fischer. For Fischer, the invasion was "not only a breach of international law but a crime against socialism."[42] Urging that a conference of West European Communist parties be convened to "demand the immediate withdrawal of the occupation forces [and] the immediate restoration of sovereignty" to Czechoslovakia, he declared: "Should this demand not be met, it would be time to break with the current Soviet party leadership, to sever all relations with it. I consider this the moral and political duty of European Communists." The 20 members of the editorial board of *Tagebuch* went equally far in a manifesto attacking the "degenerate leadership" of the USSR: there could be no solidarity with the agents responsible for this "expression of an unprincipled great-power policy by reactionary authoritarian forces," and the way to a renewal of communism lay through "the uncompromising establishment of the truth about the character of the Soviet leadership."[43] In his aforementioned report to the Central Committee on September 12, Secretary-General Muhri treated Fischer and the *Tagebuch* group with significant gentleness, commenting merely that their call for a break with the CPSU was "incorrect," since "the way ahead for us can only be to continue the discussion and the contacts, in order to contribute to a solution."[44]

Fischer's counterpart in France was Roger Garaudy, head of the party's research center and its leading revisionist theorist. In the two months following the invasion the PCF gradually stepped up its criticism of the occupation—but it never caught up with Garaudy. Barred from the party press, he used bourgeois publications and the radio to denounce the "relapse into Stalinism,"[45] which

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[39] District congresses of the British CP in October gave a rare chance to assess middle-rank dissension: the West of England congress endorsed the condemnation of the occupation by 24 votes to 13, with 2 abstentions, and the East Midlands meeting by 32 to 21, with 4 abstentions (*Morning Star*, Oct. 21).

[40] The Italian CP, for example, met predictable disaffection with a formidable campaign of propaganda and publicity. Within days of the invasion almost all 109 federal committees had discussed and voted on the party's stand (which all approved); within three weeks a majority of the 10,000 section committees had met.

[41] The most notable example of pro-Soviet dissidence at the upper level of leadership was provided by Jeannette Vermeersch, widow of Maurice Thorez and member of the PCF Politburo. At the October plenum the Central Committee "unanimously rejected" her "divergent and contradictory position" on the invasion and accepted her resignation from the Politburo and the CC, symbolizing the PCF's abandonment of *suivisme thorézien*.

[42] Austrian Television, Sept. 10, 1968.

[43] "Zur Okkupation der CSSR: eine Erklaerung" (three-page leaflet), Vienna, Aug. 31, 1968.

[44] *Volksstimme*, Sept. 15, 1968.

[45] Radio Europe I, Oct. 16, 1968.

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They are talking of an agreement in Moscow; a Diktat *is not an agreement. There can be no agreement between the wound and the knife.*

—Ernst Fischer, Austrian CP; Austrian Television, Sept. 10, 1968.

What has been condemned in Czechoslovakia is, essentially, the theses which we French Communists defend . . . it is the Czechs who have applied Leninist thought, while the Soviet leaders have given proof of Stalinist dogmatism.

—Roger Garaudy, French CP; *Le Nouvel Observateur* (Paris), Oct. 21, 1968.

had given "a loathsome face" to socialism. Attacking not the Soviet Union but the leadership responsible for this "crime," he argued that the PCF must decisively reject the system imposed on Czechoslovakia and develop a humanistic, democratic, pluralistic "French model of socialism." [46]

At the Central Committee plenum of October 20-21 Garaudy accepted official censure for his breaches of party discipline and promised to work in the future within the framework of "collective research"—but "without renouncing ideas which I hold to be true." Moreover, the disciplining of Garaudy was more than balanced at the plenum by the censure of Jeannette Vermeersch, Thorez's widow, whose resignation from her posts in the leadership was accepted (Garaudy remains in the Politburo). And, whereas he was rebuked merely for his undisciplined methods, she was blamed for the substance of her arguments attempting to justify the invasion within the inner councils of the leadership: her pro-Soviet positions were refuted in detail by Waldeck Rochet and Gaston Plissonnier, the *rapporteur*.[47]

The Ivry plenum also demonstrated another general effect of the Czechoslovak crisis on the West European parties: it led them to strengthen their commitment to revisionist positions in domestic affairs, in an effort to lessen the political losses inflicted by the invasion—as concretely illustrated by the electoral setbacks of the Swedish and Finnish parties.[48] At the same time, being Communists, they were led to formulate their differences with the Eastern regimes in ideological terms—which made the rift deeper and more enduring. In reaffirming the party's condemnation of the armed intervention, Gaston Plissonnier presented it as a violation of theses adopted by the entire world movement at the 1957 and 1960 conferences: the PCF insisted that "the principles of *independence, equality and non-interference* . . . must be not only proclaimed but respected by all Communist parties without exeception." [49] Moreover, the French made it clear that they would not give way at the interparty talks scheduled to start in Moscow on November 4: "It seems to us," said Plissonnier, "that on the Czechoslovak events . . . we can restrict ourselves to summarizing our respective positions."

The stand of the pro-Czechoslovak Communist parties of Western Europe also found expression in their attitude to the treaty of October 16, which gave a semblance of legality to the "temporary" stationing of Soviet troops in Czechoslovakia. Although accepted by the Czechoslovaks under duress, the treaty nonetheless offered the Western parties a chance to withdraw from their anti-occupation positions and resume their traditional solidarity with the CPSU. They declined to take that opportunity. At their Central Committee meetings held after the signing, the Italian and French party leaders simply ignored the treaty. Instead, Plissonnier insisted that a solution must be sought through the implementation by both sides of the original Moscow agreement of August 26, in which the CPSU "declares that the forces which intervened will be progressively withdrawn, that they will not interfere in internal Czechoslovak affairs, and that cooperation between the two countries will be

[46] Garaudy elaborated these themes in a study published in October entitled *Pour un modèle français du socialisme*, which was essentially a new version of his earlier work (April 1968), *Peut-on être communiste aujourd'hui?* The main changes were in the chapters on the Czechoslovak and Soviet "models": the first was new, and consisted of Garaudy's polemical preface to *La liberté en sursis—Prague 1968* (see footnote 1); the second omitted passages of praise and substituted a three-page indictment of party dictatorship in the USSR—a society "where the people . . . are kept in absolute ignorance of events, and where the basic organizations of the party have only the role of executing directives from above."

[47] See report on the plenum in *L'Humanité*, Oct. 23, 1968.

[48] In the September elections the Swedish CP won only 3 percent of the vote, as compared to 6.4 percent in the municipal elections of 1966; it also lost 5 of its 8 parliamentary seats. In the Finnish municipal elections of early October, support of the Communist-front SKDL fell from 22 to 17.2 percent.

[49] CC report, *L'Humanité*, Oct. 23; original emphasis.

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developed in mutual observance of equality, territorial integrity, independence and socialist solidarity." [50] At a simultaneous meeting of the Austrian Central Committee, Franz Muhri did mention the treaty, but only to stress that in spite of it, "a complete restoration of the sovereignty of the CSSR involves the quickest [possible] withdrawal of all foreign troops." [51]

The Widening Gap

To sum up, the new posture of the French and other West European Communist parties involves a general challenge to Soviet authority and specific opposition to Soviet policy on Czechoslovakia—but it does not constitute a break with the CPSU. In the latter regard, the motivation is not merely a matter of appeasing conservative elements within each party: it is, rather, a question of preserving the party's special status as the national section of a "world revolutionary movement" in which the CPSU, for all its "tragic errors," still retains a primacy based on historical prestige and material resources. At the same time, there is now increased emphasis (particularly by the Italian, French, British and Austrian parties) on the need to develop a new kind of "unity in diversity and autonomy" through open interparty discussion of the issues raised by the invasion. It is on this level and within this framework, moreover, that the Western parties see their best hope of influencing the outcome of the Czechoslovak drama—for example, by exploiting the conference issue.

Whatever the final outcome of that fateful drama, the new gap that has opened up between the nonruling Communist parties of Western Europe and the hard-line regimes of the East will remain, because it is the product of a basic and enduring conflict of political interests. Two months after the invasion the gap was, indeed, widening. In late October open ideological polemics broke out, as East German theorists like Kurt Hager denounced the modern revisionist heresies of "the Austrian CP, the Italian CP and other Communist parties of Western Europe," [52] and Western Communist spokesmen replied in kind. Soviet moves against recalcitrant Western leaderships—including mail propaganda campaigns,[53] embassy contacts with conservative party elements, and the withholding of commissions earned by "front firms" responsible for trade with the USSR—did not help matters. Finally, the fact that many West European parties (those of Iceland, Switzerland, Belgium, Austria, Britain, Italy, Denmark, France, and Finland) were preparing to hold congresses meant that their political conflict with the Eastern regimes over Czechoslovakia was being given a programmatic content to which the parties would stand committed.

The draft theses for the Italian party's 12th congress (scheduled for January 1969) illustrate the latter process. In this document the PCI denounced the armed intervention as a "violation of the fundamental principles on which our movement is founded" and again demanded the withdrawal of foreign troops; it rejected as "unacceptable" the new Soviet doctrine of "limited sovereignty" (as spelled out in *Pravda*, Sept. 26); it pledged itself to conduct an "ideological and political battle against positions which we hold to be erroneous and inspired by a unilateral vision of the class struggle"; and it promised, through open interparty debate, to defend the close relationship between democracy and socialism, and to work against "every conception that would make the whole force of proletarian political power consist only in the coercive apparatus of the state." [54]

The Italian theses make it clear that the complex interparty confrontation over the issues raised by the Czechoslovak crisis is far from over. As they proceed on their divergent revisionist courses, the West European Communist parties (or the great majority of them) are allied in this confrontation with the doughty Yugoslavs, the now more prudent Rumanians and the embattled Czechs themselves, as well as with individual parties in other regions.[55]

A British ex-Communist has remarked that "by invading Czechoslovakia the Russians succeeded in burying, after a delay of 25 years, the corpse of the Communist International.[56] This is certainly true of the continent which gave communism to the world.

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[50] *Ibid.*

[51] *Volksstimme*, Oct. 23, 1968.

[52] Hager, at the 9th plenum of the SED Central Committee (*Neues Deutschland*, Oct. 29, pp. 3–6). As an example of Western replies, see Berlinguer's refutation of Axen's *Einheit* article criticizing the PCI, in *Rinascita*, Oct. 25.

[53] In his report to the October plenum of the PCF (*supra*), Plissonnier complained that "almost daily an abundance of propaganda material, originating in the USSR and the GDR and seeking to justify the intervention, is distributed throughout France"—*i.e.*, to PCF sections and individual members.

[54] Supplement to *L'Unità*, Oct. 26, 1968, Section IV.

[55] The most important of these allies is the Japanese CP; after the invasion of Czechoslovakia the formerly pro-Chinese JCP broke off its halting *rapprochement* with the CPSU and sent a delegation to Paris and Rome for interparty talks.

[56] Peter Fryer in *New Society* (London), Aug. 29, 1968.

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